THE SHORT STORY MAGAZINE

ARGOSY

NOVEMBER, 1955
rice in AUSTRALIA
id NEW ZEALAND
TWO SHILLINGS

STORIES BY

MARK DERBY

JOHN MASTERS

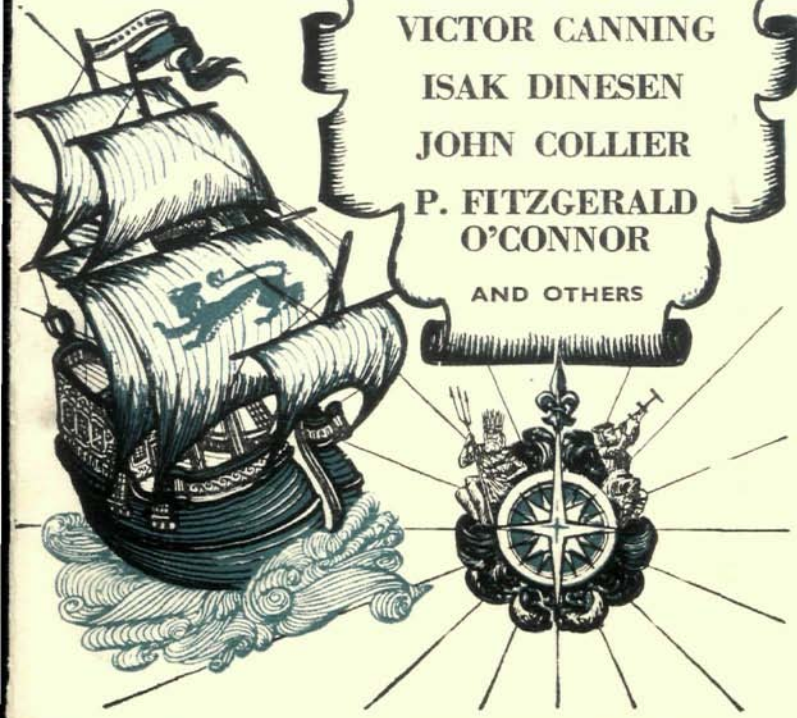
VICTOR CANNING

ISAK DINESEN

JOHN COLLIER

P. FITZGERALD O'CONNOR

AND OTHERS



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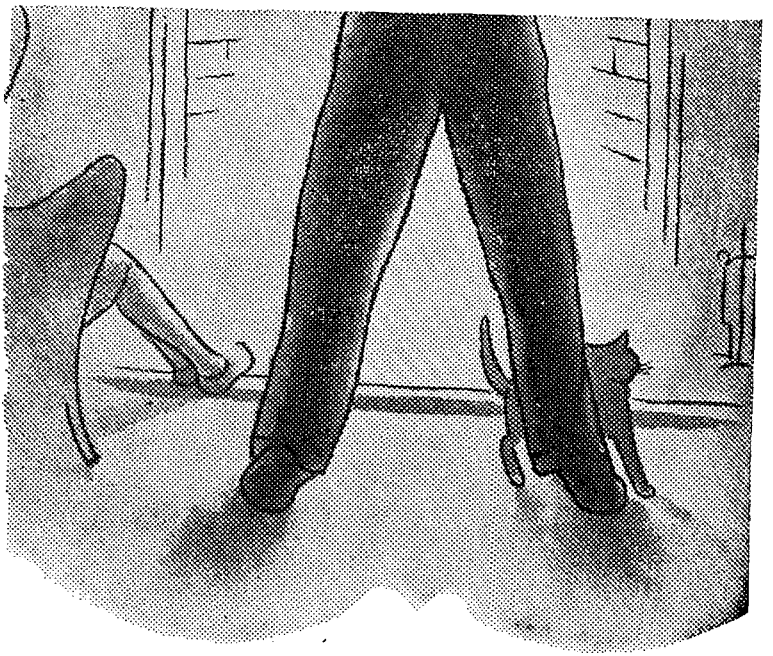

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Everybody's

The Monday Magazine for All the Family **4D**

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ARGOSY

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And can the physician make sick men well?
And can the magician a fortune tell
Without lily, germander and sops-in-wine?
With sweet-briar,
And bon-fire,
And strawberry wine,
And columbine?

Night of the Loud Pops

The Fifth of November and a large party at Evenfield beginning with tea and a mask beside every plate and progressing to a dusky lawn, with Aggie distributing the smaller fireworks from her bulging apron, and ending with a gargantuan bonfire topped with its Guy? A night that was ravishingly *heilige* and anything but *stille*, what with the distant poppings and ploopings and rockets going up in gardens and backyards all over the neighbourhood, and the sky shimmering and vibrating with lurid glares and percussive flashes . . . To our fireworks parties the Couchman children, Hope and Connie, were always invited, while their mother, busy with the washing-up, would be fetched by one of us to see the fun; their faces, mother once told me, were absolutely *bored* with excitement and ecstacy, so unutterable was their enjoyment as Stiles moved about in the dark touching off the more expensively alarming of the effects—those which are suggestively marked "Light the blue touch-paper and then stand aside" (they were run very close in cost and hinted catastrophe by those others labelled "Tie to an upright post. Not to be held in the hand").

RACHEL FERGUSON, *Evenfield*

Too Many Bonfires

To the Duke's house to see "Macbeth" . . . Thence home; the coach being forced to go round London Wall home because of the bonfires; the day being mightily observed in the city.

SAMUEL PEPYS, *Diary*, 1664

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Witches then speed on their errands of mischief, some sweeping through the air on besoms, others galloping along the roads on tabby-cats, which for that evening (Hallowe'en) are turned into coal-black steeds. The fairies, too, are all let loose, and hobgoblins of every sort roam freely about . . . We may suspect that the primary intention of all these fire-festivals was simply to destroy or at all events get rid of the witches . . . It becomes probable that the same explanation applies not only to the burning discs which are hurled into the air, but also to the burning wheels which are rolled down hill on these occasions . . . Certainly witches are constantly thought to ride through the air on broomsticks or other equally convenient vehicles, and if they do so, how can you get at them so effectually as by hurling lighted missiles, whether discs, torches or besoms after them as they flit past overhead in the gloom?

SIR JAMES GEORGE FRAZER,
The Golden Bough

Samhain Dances

At the end of summer
in the first haze of autumn stolen in from the sea,
at Samhain, the end of summer
salt smell of kelp mixed with scent of the windfall
and whirled up the chalk path at daybreak,
we sacrificed a white horse to the sun-god
and kindled great fires on the hills
and nightlong we danced in circles
with straw-plaits blazing on pitchforks.

CONRAD AIKEN, *Hallowe'en*

Morning After

In our dining-room . . . hung a large picture of the Grand Canal, believed to be by Canaletto. It is a very attractive work of the period but not, an expert assures me, by the master himself. On the morning after a certain Guy Fawkes' day I went into the garden, collected the burst remains of yesterday's fireworks and put the lot in the dining-room fire. There was a startling explosion and something hit the pseudo-Canaletto a tremendous smack, bang in the middle of its Grand Canal.

MARTIN ARMSTRONG, *Victorian Peepshow*

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CHINESE TRIANGLE

BY VICTOR CANNING

Readers of Victor Canning's fast-moving, colourful stories will not be surprised to learn that he was supporting himself by free-lance writing at the early age of twenty-five. He was born in 1911, *and started his literary career by writing boys' adventure stories as a sideline. Married, with two daughters, he now lives in Kent, and finds writing a full-time occupation. Best-selling novels of his include "Panthers' Moon," "Venetian Bird," and "The Golden Salamander."*

THE dusk was settling in, and across the bay we could see the lights of Kowloon breaking into life. Cham Long accepted one of my cigarettes and smiled happily. We sat on the terrace with the scrub and grass hills rising behind us.

Below, one of Cham's many brothers was driving a flock of ducks into the compound. Another brother was working with the crew of the fishing-junk that Cham owned. They were at the edge of the muddy creek, singeing the foul hull with flaming rice straw and dressing the timbers with tung-oil. Cham's father had just brought in the water buffalo and, somewhere in the house under the tall eucalyptus trees, Cham's wife was busy with the cooking. A happy, contented man was Cham, prosperous and never doing a hand's turn himself.

"China," said Cham, "is like a match burning from the wrong end. One day soon the flame will reach Hong Kong, which is tip of match. Before that happen, I sell everything and go somewhere else. Once a man is rich, he likes to stay that way. It is good for his self-respect."

"You were very poor once, weren't you, Cham?"

"Once I am the poorest and stupidest boy in all Hong Kong. But then one day, very quickly, I grow up and become richest and most intelligent boy. It is remarkable transformation. You like to hear?" Without waiting, he began his story.

"When I am poor boy in Kowloon," he said, "I work for a

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very rich jewel merchant. I am everything, you understand, and yet nothing. I am the dog that sleeps before the door at night. I am the bell that rings for meals. I am fetch and I am carry. I am everything which is inconsiderable, and also I am stupid."

The merchant's name, said Cham, was Tung Ho. Tung Ho was a rogue, a fat, easy-going, shrewd rogue, and the only other servants he had were a chauffeur-handyman-cook called Karytus, who was a mixture of Greek and Portuguese, and a girl secretary whose Chinese name meant Little Red Flower-that-Blushes-at-the-Touch-of-the-Dew.

"I am so stupid in those days," said Cham, "that I really think she is his secretary. She was beautiful. Always in red she dressed, with black dragons worked on her gown in the finest silk. She is like a pomegranate tree with its first spring blossoms."

Every weekend Tung Ho used to leave Kowloon and go in his motor launch to a summer house he had on an island in the wide estuary mouth of the Pearl River. It was a long trip, and he always took Cham, Karytus, and Red Flower, and the ritual was always the same. The moment Tung Ho was aboard he went into his cabin, took down from where it hung behind the door his yellow gown of the nine dragons, lit himself a small opium pipe, and smoked for five minutes before going off to sleep. The moment he was asleep, Red Flower would leave him and come out to Karytus and Cham, who would be at the wheel of the launch.

"I did not understand then," said Cham, "that she wished to be with Karytus, who was her lover. Even now I do not understand how Red Flower could love him. But she did. Karytus was a plain man, and so lazy it was a pain for him to get up and dress in the morning. Tung Ho was always complaining about his laziness." Cham explained that at this island summer house Tung Ho used to meet clients and sell them jewels without any awkward questionings of their origin. Apparently he had a bad name in the city, and some deals he preferred to carry out well away from the police.

"It is on one of these weekends that I ceased to be a poor stupid boy," said Cham. "I am at the quayside with the launch and Red Flower when Tung Ho arrives in a car with Karytus from the house. Karytus carries the master's two weekend suitcases aboard and the master follows him, carrying a little black box under his arm."

Karytus put the cases in the cabin and then went to the wheel and started the engine. The whole procedure, said Cham, went as usual. Tung Ho and Red Flower disappeared into the cabin for the ritual of the pipe and the sleep.

Cham sat by Karytus as the Greek took the launch out through

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the harbour traffic. It was already dark, and the lights of the shipping and the city filled the night with jewels. That's how Cham put it. Karytus was smoking and took no notice of Cham for a while. Then, as he kept looking impatiently towards the cabin door, he suddenly said to Cham, "You know what it is the master has in the small black box?"

Cham shook his head.

"You are a fool," said Karytus. "It is diamonds. Many diamonds."

"It is reasonable. After all, he is a jewel merchant," said Cham. Karytus laughed at this. They were clearing the harbour traffic now. The lights of Kowloon and Victoria were dropping behind them. Soon they would be abreast of Lantao Island and heading for the mouth of the Pearl River.

"You know what day this is?" asked Karytus.

Cham shook his head. He was puzzled that Karytus should talk so much to him. Usually he was just kicked or cuffed.

"You are a fool. This is the day I become rich. This is the day I become a master and say good-bye to Hong Kong . . . This is the day of happiness for me and Red Flower."

Cham did not understand this at all. But, as he explained to me, he was disturbed because Karytus did not usually talk to him.

"My friend," Cham said, "I was innocent as well as stupid. It is man's tragedy that when stupidity goes, so does most of his innocence. The bud opens and almost at once the petals begin to fade. So I sat there with Karytus, and when we were abreast of Lantao Island, the cabin door opened and Red Flower came out. She came back to Karytus and put her hands against his face and kissed him."

Cham was silent for a while, thinking of the scene. Then he took another of my cigarettes and went on with his tale.

Karytus asked Red Flower if Tung Ho was asleep, and she nodded. Karytus stood up and slipped a dagger out of his belt. He began to move towards the cabin door when he stopped and looked at Cham. "What about the boy?" he asked.

Red Flower looked at Cham, and she was like a flame in the darkness in her red gown, the binnacle lamp sending shivers of light over it. "He is young and stupid. When it is done, he can be pushed overboard and swim to Lantao Island. He cannot harm us. We shall soon be far away."

Karytus nodded and went forward.

And Cham sat there, more disturbed than ever. He was not worried so much about himself, he pointed out. After all, to be pushed overboard and to have to swim three miles was more or less the kind of treatment he had grown to expect. He could

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swim like an eel, too. No, his real worry was that he felt something was going to happen to Tung Ho.

" Looking back on it now," he said, " it seems impossible that even a boy could be so stupid. But I was. I had no understanding of evil in my wooden head, so why should I recognize it? Now, it is plain what they had planned. Karytus was to murder Tung Ho in his sleep, and the two lovers, after pushing me over, would be away in the launch. Where would they go? With the diamonds and money, in those days they had the whole world. Macao first of all . . . And then, who knows? "

So Cham sat there with Red Flower. She had taken the wheel from Karytus. She was singing a little tune to herself, and her eyes were like black plums polished by the summer rain, said Cham, and he thought she was the most beautiful thing in the world. She said nothing to him. She watched Karytus slip quietly into the cabin and not once did she stop the gentle song she sang, and the water slipping under the counter of the launch made an accompaniment for her.

A few seconds later, there was a long-drawn scream from the cabin. Then a terrible grunting noise, and then silence.

Cham stood up, alarmed, but Red Flower put out a hand and made him sit down. " What is it? " he asked.

She smiled at him and said softly, " It is a man greeting his fathers, little one."

It was then that Cham understood. " But why has Karytus killed the master? " he asked Red Flower.

Red Flower answered, smiling, " It was necessary for our love and our prosperity. With his diamonds we shall feed our love."

" You love Karytus? "

" As the moon the sea." So Cham and Red Flower sat there. After a time the door of the cabin opened.

But it was not Karytus who came out. It was Tung Ho. He came down the deck towards Red Flower, a fat, threatening figure, moving slowly, each step he took making the figures of the nine dragons on his yellow gown sway and writhe. He was smiling a little so that the edge of his teeth showed, and under one arm he held the little black box of diamonds.

" He stood there," said Cham, " looking like a man well pleased with himself, and in his right hand he held the future of Red Flower—a long dagger dark with blood."

Red Flower said nothing. She had risen and stood facing him, with one hand steadying the wheel of the launch.

Tung Ho said, " I have killed Karytus. It is a pity. Lazy though he was—and many times I threatened to dismiss him—

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yet he was a good mechanic. It will be a little trouble to replace him. But you, my Red Flower, who would not blush at the touch of blood on your hands, it will be no trouble to replace."

Red Flower said, "Honourable master, I knew nothing of Karytus's plans."

Tung Ho ignored her. "I shall kill you, Red Flower. A woman in a red dragon gown is easily replaced."

He took another step forward, and the dagger was raised a little. The skirt of his yellow robe lifted gently in the night breeze and, without looking at Cham, Tung Ho said to the boy, "You have nothing to fear from me. But learn this lesson, boy. Be a good servant and not a lazy one like Karytus if you should plan to kill and rob your master.

"Little Red Flower"—he took another step towards her—"it was the laziness of your lover that brought him death and brings it also to you. He did not know it, but before we come away for these weekends, I always open my cases to see that he has packed everything. Today, before we left the house, I opened them and I found them empty. It was not hard to guess the reason. Why should Karytus give himself the trouble of packing clothes I should never need? And because of his lazy logic I was waiting for him when he came to my cabin."

He stepped forward swiftly to Red Flower and the dagger flashed above his head. But even as he moved, Red Flower, who had been standing with one hand inside the breast of her long gown, withdrew her hand. Tung Ho was a foot from her when she fired. He dropped to the deck, and the little black box of diamonds tumbled forward towards the cabin door.

Red Flower turned to Cham and said, "Learn this lesson too. When the gods put power into your hands, it is wise to strike first and talk afterwards."

She raised the revolver to fire at Cham.

"But already," Cham said to me, "I was running. For in that moment I had read in her face and eyes what she meant to do. In that moment I lost my stupidity and my innocence and became a man. I ran forward and she missed me. I picked up the black box, dived over the side, and escaped into the darkness of the sea."

He paused, looking down at his farm and his house and the movement of the workers. "She never came back, and I kept the diamonds. Red Flower . . . She was beautiful. Her face, even as she fired at me, was like a water-lily on a still pool."

★ ★ ★

The only thing that goes as far as it used to do, is the shilling that rolls under the bed.

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SOME DAY I'LL FIND YOU

BY MARK DERBY

IT HAPPENED on Ship Day.

In Kalianga nobody ever said Thursday. They said Ship Day instead. Because every Thursday afternoon Kalianga, the most isolated outpost on all that stretch of Borneo coast, was in touch with the world. The two weekly boats, one outward from Singapore, the other on the return journey, tied up for a few hours of Thursday at the town's old wooden jetty.

The two ships brought Kalianga supplies, gossip, mails, entertainment. The dozen European residents of the district normally spent half the day on board one or other of them. But this Ship Day, though the *Katibas* had been tied up for an hour, two of Kalianga's handful of Europeans were giving her a miss.

Julie Hayes sat on the wide verandah of her brother's hilltop bungalow, looking down indifferently on the ship that had drawn all but one other European in Kalianga like a magnet. Each week she watched the ships go, with relief, like a fugitive watching pursuers turn away from his hide-out. And she closed her eyes for a second as the roar of the police-jeep burst round the corner and Tex Oliver jumped out and took the bungalow steps three at a time.

For a moment they faced each other at the top of the steps without a word—without a word, but close together in a deep, breathless intimacy. Then suddenly, with a swift, perfectly synchronized movement, they met in each other's arms.

After the long, spellbound moment they drew apart and looked at each other with wonder-dazed eyes.

"Julie!"

"Tex!"

Except that he gave a strong impression of steadiness, there was nothing very special about Tex Oliver. Ordinary, big, and brown—brown crisp hair, brown steady eyes, tropic-brown skin—dressed now in white T-shirt, blue shorts, and Indian sandals. But Julie's brother had told her he was the outstanding junior

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police-officer along the coast, and by now, for Julie, he was something very specially special.

Julie herself did look like something special. Brown-eyed blondes, the sort with really yellow hair and dark hazel eyes and honey-rose complexions are special anywhere; when you add a perfect figure and a dizzy depth in those brown eyes, it all adds up to something unforgettable.

He said to her, " Shall we go? "

She nodded. They were going across to Shadow Island for a fishing picnic. In all this romantic district—coast, mountain, and jungle—Julie liked the island best. Nobody lived there because the local people believed it was the home of their ancestors' ghosts—hence the name. The natives wouldn't even approach it in their boats, so usually Julie went alone, handling the outboard of her brother's canoe. She sought solitude as instinctively as a wounded animal. . .

That was how she had come to Kalianga from Australia two months ago. Sick and afraid, a fugitive with a secret. Not even her brother knew what had gone wrong, except that her engagement had been broken off and afterwards she'd been ill. She had proposed the visit herself, after declining half a dozen previous invitations.

Only in the last two or three weeks, only as her friendship with Tex Oliver deepened, had she begun to lose her hunted, haunted look. Sometimes—when he was looking into her eyes, for instance—she lost it altogether.

The phone bell rang just as they were leaving, and Julie answered it. " Yes, this is the doctor's house, but he's up-country this week. Oh—" she turned to Tex—" it's for you," she said. " A priority signal."

As he took the phone from her he handed her a packet of letters. " Brought up your brother's mail," he said. " There's one for you."

Yes, there was one for her; and the sight of the angular, impetuous handwriting on the envelope reduced her in a second from a girl blissfully, eagerly in love back to the haunted, hunted thing she had been on the Ship Day when first she'd landed at Kalianga.

Tex Oliver hung up and sighed. " Sorry, Julie, I'm a non-starter. Call of duty. Ordered to meet the *Rejang* and then leave on the *Katibas* for Jesselton."

She only looked at him strangely, almost as if his bad news were a relief.

He burst out, " Julie, this is hell, I'll have to go straight away.

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The *Rejang*'s due in under an hour and I'll have to change back into uniform. But—" he took her two elbows suddenly in his hands—" but there's something I must say first. I meant to say it over on the island, but now . . . I suppose you know what it is?"

She knew, but she turned away.

" Just that I love you, Julie." His voice wasn't quite steady. " That's the future I want now. With you, Julie. Always."

She drew away, with a single pleading glance up at him. " Let's talk about it some other time, Tex. Not now. And don't . . . don't count too much on a future. Futures can let you down."

He stared down at her in dismay. " But I thought . . ."

A ship's siren interrupted him and he looked up to see the *Rejang* rounding the west horn of the bay well ahead of schedule. He said again, " This is hell, Julie. I must meet her as she ties up. And I'll be leaving on the *Katibas*. A whole week before I see you again."

She said gravely, " Look after yourself, Tex, and never mind." The hurt bewilderment in his eyes as he left hurt her too. She stood with eyes and fists tightly closed while the echo of the jeep engine faded and died. Then she seized the letter.

She was on the point of tearing it up unopened, as she'd torn up all those other letters that had pursued her from Australia, when suddenly she saw the stamp.

Not an Australian stamp. A Malay stamp. And a Singapore postmark only three days old. Not forwarded, like the others, through her Sydney bank, but addressed to her direct.

Marco Blair had found her.

With the first words of the letter she was back in her nightmare.

My Julie,

What made you think you could escape me?

When we promised ourselves to each other, we did something final. Only death can break that sort of promise. I shall never break mine and I haven't released you from yours. I never will.

If it's another man who's come between us—well, you remember another promise I made. Expect me soon.

Your Marco.

The small, jagged scar on the third finger of her left hand showed white against the tropical tan. The last time she and Marco Blair had been together, he had left that scar. She'd given him back his ring, when breaking off their engagement in a climax of revulsion and panic, and he, transformed from a lover into a

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monster, had fought her, forcing the ring back on her finger, tearing her flesh, staining her dress with blood.

Violence, anyway, had been the keynote of the six wild weeks she had known Marco Blair. Their first meeting had been a collision, literally. His army motor bike, cornering at fifty, had touched her mudguard. They had recovered consciousness in the same moment, both unhurt, and within a few minutes they were in love.

In love? No, it hadn't been love, she knew that now. Something more violent than real love, unsteadier, something tinged with the devouring, unhealthy excitement of an evil drug. A madness. With Julie it had lasted a month. Marco was a sergeant in the Australian Army, with five more months to serve. They planned to be married on the day of his release. Julie lived four weeks in a drug-dream of infatuation from which she woke with agonizing shock.

Marco Blair was the most exciting lover, the strongest personality, and the best-looking man her most intimate dreams had ever pictured. But running right through him was a monstrous flaw. He had no brakes: his very intensity, the breathless, vivid sweep of him were signs of dangerous abnormality, of something that swung close to madness when he was roused.

It was his jealousy that finally awakened Julie to the real Marco. She never did anything in the month of their engagement to justify jealousy, but again and again she had to submit to wild, bullying accusations until finally, in the midst of a furious scene, she threw his ring back at him.

His reaction killed her waning infatuation in a few terrifying moments. There were his brutal attempts to force the ring back on her finger, but they were nothing beside his threats. She was finally, irrevocably his, he swore.

" I have your promise, Julie. You can't take it back and I'll never release you. You'll never be another man's wife—unless you want to be another man's widow! That's a promise. And if you run away from me, however far you run, *some day I'll find you.* That's a promise, too."

Now he'd found her. He was in Singapore; and when the Singapore boat tied up next Ship Day, he'd stride off it. Only a week. She was only a week ahead of his crazy pursuit.

She cried out " Oh Tex! " and thought, Tex is the man he'll try to kill. Because I love him. If he knows. If Tex knows . . .

That was why, as soon as she'd seen Marco Blair's letter, she'd pulled herself up in her response to Tex. Suddenly she had realized how insecure any future together would be—and how short.

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She held the verandah rail and gazed down into the small harbour. The *Rejang* was tying up astern of the *Katibas* and now the gangway was jerking down. Exactly a week from now . . . An hour ago Kalianga had been a refuge. Now it was a trap.

Her eyes swept the jetty, seeking the police-jeep and Tex's uniformed figure. But he hadn't appeared yet. The *Rejang*'s gangway was down now and a passenger was disembarking in a hurry.

Julie suddenly raised her hands to her throat as if to tear away a stranglehold. It was no good crying out, trying not to believe her eyes. Marco Blair was already striding off the jetty in the sweaty sun-glare and taking the right fork that would bring him up to the bungalow in ten minutes.

She ought to have known he'd never wait in Singapore after sending that letter. He'd flown across to Jesselton, of course, and embarked on the *Rejang* there yesterday.

Her lead had shrunk from seven days to little more than seven minutes.

And where could she look for help now? Her brother was up-country and all the other Europeans were down on the ships—she could see Tex now, just jumping out of his jeep and climbing the *Rejang*'s gangway. And Marco Blair was on the road between her and all of them. Cutting her off.

She began to tremble. The breakdown that had followed her escape from Marco Blair wasn't a hundred-per-cent cured yet. She stared round the orchid-hung verandah, the hilltop crowned with pinang palms, the bay below with its swarm of prahus anchored in the foreground, and the screen of islands sheltering it from the ocean.

The islands. Shadow Island, a little apart from the others, just two miles by one and a quarter, with a crescent bay of white sand, one jungle-covered hill, one spring of sweet water, one leaf-thatched hut with a locked case of provisions, fishing-tackle, and a couple of camp-beds.

She was down the steps and across the road, and in five racing seconds was swallowed up in the narrow short-cut path, steep and thorn-trapped, that led down to the hidden cove where her brother's boat waited in its small thatched shelter.

She scarcely breathed until she had untied the boat and pushed it into the tide, wading more than knee-deep in the blood-warm green water, flicked the starting-cord, and set a course for Shadow Island. Marco Blair couldn't follow her there, even if he discovered where she had gone, because no local boatman would ever take him to Shadow Island.

And never before had the cool, deeply shaded landing-creek

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seemed so snugly safe. When she cut the motor and glided to the bank, the silence and remoteness closed round her like protecting arms and she just sat there for minutes, panting like a hunted animal that had found refuge, letting the peace and safety of the place draw the tension out of her.

After her pulses had slowed to normal she went and bathed under the small waterfall and opened up the little hut. A few birds sang drowsily in the heavy afternoon heat and the cool, splashing murmur of the waterfall soothed her.

Minutes slipped by. An hour, two hours . . . Until the sun set in a rose-and-purple blaze over the mountains, she was at peace. Slowly then the unease began to seep back.

First came the realization that she faced ten hours of darkness alone on the island. There was no oil for the lamp; on their last visit her brother's dog had knocked over the can, and she'd forgotten to put a new one in the boat. Then, in a stately constellation of yellow lights, the *Katibas* sailed, passing within half a mile of the island as she left the bay.

The suspense that had been spinning a web round Julie ever since the sun went down suddenly tightened its grip. Tex was aboard the *Katibas*, being carried away from her swiftly into the devouring darkness.

Suddenly she was screaming.

"Tex! Tex!" The sound of her cry terrified her, silenced her, stilled the gust of panic for a moment; but she watched the ship lights vanish slowly across the dark ocean, and crouched on the yellow sand in helplessness, unable for long minutes to summon courage to return to the dark hut.

When at last she was again in control of herself, she turned along the starlit beach that showed only her own lonely footsteps, with a spell of helpless dread still on her. So the shock, when she groped her way into the dark hut, was half expected. The shock when a voice—very deep, very soft, very intimate, and never-to-be-forgotten—said, "Julie!"

Inevitably, he'd found her.

Maybe, deep down, she'd known that no resistance she could put up would be equal to the dark intensity that blazed in Marco Blair's handsome eyes and burnt in his deep, always soft voice. She could see him now in the starlight, the vigorous black hair and massive shoulders, and the points of light in his grey eyes. And she felt his coiled intensity charging the darkness with the vivid, unseen forces of an emotional storm.

He didn't attempt to touch her, just moved silently between her and the doorway.

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"I've found you, Julie," he whispered at the end of an icy-tingling silence. His voice was soft with the old, deep intimacy. Always that voice of his had suggested honeymoon moonlight and even now some part of her responded helplessly. "Why did you *run* away? You know it's you for me and me for you for ever and ever. We found that out before we'd known each other an hour. Didn't we, Julie? We knew at once."

"I thought I knew, Marco," she said quietly, fighting for control. "But I soon discovered I was wrong. And when I told you, honestly and frankly, you did everything you could to frighten and hurt me. And now . . . persecuting me like this, threatening me, and following me when I try to make a new start in a new country. I've been ill, Marco. You made me ill."

He said sharply, "No, Julie. *I* made you happy. You made *yourself* ill, fighting me and fate. People who fight fate always get beaten; beaten, ill, and unhappy. You just couldn't trust me, couldn't believe I loved you."

She said, "Yes, I believed you, Marco. But it happens all the time—two people in love, but one loving more deeply and longer than the other. I was the one whose love didn't last. I'm sorry, Marco."

He moved closer, but still didn't touch her. "It's another man," he said tensely. "I know you, Julie. All about you. I know how your voice sounded when you were first in love with me and how it changed when your delusions got a hold on you. Now it's your in-love voice again. But not for me, is it? It's another man."

"Yes, Marco," she confessed. "Another man. I love him. This time I know."

She shouldn't have said that. It roused the dark devil in him. His hands seized her and after three months of escape she was a prisoner in his arms again, the arms that had once thrilled her madly with their half-brutal strength.

"Why can't you understand," he demanded, "that you're *mine*? That no other man is going to steal my promised wife and live?"

She held herself rigid and spoke deliberately, trying to stem the flood-rise of his passion with a show of calm. "Marco, you must leave me. Go away now, before it's too late, before you run into big trouble."

"Big trouble?" He laughed, the echo of it startling her after the low murmur of his whisper. "Julie, you've let me in for big trouble already. The biggest kind." He laughed again, rather unsteadily, then asked, "Don't you remember what day this is?"

She reckoned. "November the twentieth. The day you were

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due for release from the Army. Then . . . then you're a deserter!"

"Never mind that," he said. She could feel the gallop of his heart against her breast. "Never mind that. Today I was coming out of the Army. And tonight . . ."

She stiffened and didn't reply, closing her eyes against his starlit stare.

"You can't have forgotten, Julie. A woman doesn't forget her wedding-day."

It was true. They had planned to be married within an hour of his release. Now she was terrified. Without knowing it, she began to sob.

For a moment it softened him. "Julie, Julie," he pleaded. "Don't be scared of me. Please don't, Julie. As if you'd forgotten how I love you."

That touched her, the reminder that there was tenderness in him, that she had hurt him. He sounded so much like his old self that she made a second appeal. "Marco, if you love me, if you don't hate me, you'll go away and never try to see me again."

But he wasn't listening. He said, his eyes on the palms silhouetted above the starlit bay, "It was a south-sea island we fixed on for our honeymoon, but I guess this is near enough." And suddenly, feeling her straining to escape his arms, the devil in him broke loose again.

There was a tiny green flash in the darkness and sickening pain in her left hand. His emerald engagement ring was back on her third finger. But still her hand was being crushed, torn, and in the rising moonlight she saw the blood and the yellow band glinting above the green star of the emerald. His wedding-ring.

"My bride!" The deep, soft whisper was dangerously unsteady now. "My little bride!"

Convulsively she arched her whole terrified body and tore free of him and ran, ran blindly, desperately, down the beach. On the island she could never hope to elude him now, but in the sea she could escape. She could die under the sea and be for ever out of his reach. . .

But no, she couldn't. He caught her in the shallows, overpowered her, swung her up in greedy arms, and carried her, dripping, back to the hut. The salt water stung the new wounds the rings had inflicted on her finger.

"There's only this way, Julie," he whispered, "of saving you from breaking your vow. Only this way."

Dark mists of despair closed in, suffocatingly. She didn't understand what halted him so suddenly in the doorway, not until she heard the sound of the launch, too.

The police-launch. The snarl of its motor was unmistakable.

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Marco Blair set her down abruptly and in that moment the searchlight opened up on them.

She heard the launch engine cut, but she could see nothing because the searchlight blinded her. She couldn't even see Marco Blair, for he had dodged behind her in the doorway of the hut. But suddenly she did see something, close to her right eye. The barrel of the automatic that Blair was levelling over her right shoulder.

Thirty seconds of tight-stretched suspense went by, in the searchlight's burning stare. She felt Blair's body stiffen and believed he was aiming to shoot out the light, when a voice over to their left said, " Sergeant Blair, drop that gun and put up your hands."

Tex's voice. He wasn't on the *Katibas*; he was there only a few yards away from her. In danger.

Like a tiger disturbed at his kill, Marco Blair snarled and peered into the darkness through which Tex had come ashore, the blackness outside the searchlight beam. The arm holding Julie didn't rise and the gun didn't drop. Blair was using her as a shield, held tightly in front of his hoarsely panting chest.

The next moment her eardrums almost snapped as Blair fired a burst of automatic across her face in the direction from which Tex's voice had sounded. She screamed in terror, not for herself but for Tex. Because out of the darkness had come a sharp cry and a little sob of shock and pain. Tex was hit.

Like a mad thing, she turned on Blair then, unafraid of the gun or the monster who held it. The sheer ferocity of her attack sent him momentarily back on his heels and that was the moment when two Malay policemen jumped out of the shadows.

She found Tex with a bloodstained sleeve. Without a word he put his good arm round her protectively, and they climbed slowly to the hut, where Marco Blair cursed and hammered his handcuffed wrists against the door-post. Moving into the searchlight beam, Tex said, " Sergeant Marco Watson Blair, I arrest you for the murder of Corporal Dennis Baily at Sydney on the sixth of this month."

Big trouble . . . She remembered Blair's laugh. He was in big trouble already, he'd said. And she saw why Tex hadn't sailed on the *Katibas*: the priority signal had ordered him to arrest Blair on the *Rejang* and take him on the *Katibas* to Jesselton.

" Yes, Baily was a cop, too, a military one," Blair sneered. " Too bad I didn't send you to keep him company."

Tex ordered the policemen to take him to the launch . . .

So they were together on Shadow Island after all. By the

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light of the searchlight and the help of the hut's first-aid kit Julie dressed Tex's arm. Then she told him, "Before we go, there's something I want to say."

He said doubtfully, "The sooner that brute's locked up the better, Julie."

"It won't take long," she said. "It's only . . . yes."

"You mean—?" His eyes glowed in the fierce yellow blaze.

"That I'm not afraid any more," she explained. "There's no need now. So . . . yes, Tex."

★ ★ ★

BRAN TUB

Take a dip into our new batch of questions — if your luck is in, your total haul should be seventeen. Answers on page 120.

1. *Is the backbone of a camel straight or humped?* (1)

2. *To what Queens does Shakespeare allude in the following lines:*
   a. She should have died hereafter
   b. Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale Her infinite variety
   c. And the imperial votaress passed on, In maiden meditation fancy free (3)

3. *Anyone can tell a Swiss roll from a Scotch reel, but can you identify: a. a Dutch wife b. Dutch courage c. a Dutch hoe d. a Dutch auction* (4)

4. *Who is known as the Primate of England?* (1)

5. *SOS! Help! What do these letters stand for?* (1)

6. *How do you write the signs or marks known as: a. caret b. tilde c. ampersand* (3)

7. *Writers know what makes the world go round—as witness their titles! Can you name the authors? a. The Loved One b. Love Among the Artists c. Love in a Cold Climate d. The Four Winds of Love* (4)

★ ★ ★

HOLSTEIN

I bought a little Holstein calf:
It wasn't Holstein but by half.
And half a Holstein, bull or cow,
I'd call a Halfstein anyhow.

DAVID MCCORD, *Odds Without Ends*

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A CHEAP LINE IN CHERUBS

BY PATRICIA SIBLEY

AUTUMN slunk about the fringes of Dartmoor like a shifty fox, unsure of the hounds of summer. It was Saturday evening, and the valleys were already brimming with shadow as Matthew the carpenter walked slowly up the village street from his workshop. The cottage windows were winking at the setting sun, but Matthew scowled. A queer time of year, autumn, he thought; came in twinges, like rheumatism.

"Her's got twins," said a voice.

Matthew looked up slowly. "Ah, Tom," he said. Then after a pause, "Who has?"

"Missus," said Tom.

"Ah, you'll be wanting another cradle, then."

"Lord, don't ye think of anything but wood, man? 'Tis a great event, the first twins in Upperdown this eighty year, folk do tell."

"Ah," said Matthew.

"All along of Mother Sunday, they be. Her did come poking her head in yester morning, and her says to Missus, 'Be ye blessed by sun and moon!' her says. And when I comes along down dinner-time, bless me if there aren't two bairns waiting. Dear little maid one be, fair as moon. 'Tis a great Blessing."

"Ah," said Matthew.

Then he went slowly on through the dusk, out of the village to the fringe of the moor where his hut crouched by a stone wall, grey as the twilight. He was very proud of the hut, built with his own hands from the ruin of an old sheep-pound. The chinks

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between the rock slabs were plugged with turf; there was a bench and a table made with oddments from the workshop, a pile of dry bracken and heather under some old coats taking up one wall.

Above all, there was the mantelpiece. They had sneered when he built the hut; They had sneered when he spoke of a chimney, but the rock slab mantelpiece had silenced They completely. Matthew patted it lovingly, drew out a handful of shavings from his pocket, and soon there was a fire, for autumn came in twinges.

Somehow there was something wrong in the hut. The fire leapt, smoke curled out in a friendly way from chinks in the chimney, and bacon sizzled, but there was a lack of something. A Blessing would be a nice thing to have . . . comforting, like. He had once been offered a cat for company, but they were queer things, cats, creepy and proud. He finished the bacon and decided there could be no possible harm in going to see Mother Sunday about a Blessing.

On the mantelpiece was a large, brittle white vase, inscribed with a coat of arms and *A Present from Brighton* in gold letters, a reward from old Miss Dearlove for such a fine finish on the coffin, the coffin which she now kept ready under her bed.

Whatever was left over from the week's housekeeping was put into the vase every Saturday night and became the next week's "Duck money." There was that weekend quite an amount in it as he had not visited the Duck for a whole week on account of the twinges. He emptied the vase out on the table. There was two and sevenpence. With this week's that made three and eleven. It would mean no visit to the Duck for a time, but then three and eleven ought to buy a decent, substantial Blessing.

Next morning he emptied all the money into his pocket and set off for Mother Sunday's cottage at the other end of the village. Most folk were at church, only in Tom's house there was a sound of bustle to and fro, and Matthew realized as he drew nearer that he was afraid of his errand. The old woman had a reputation for strangeness for many miles around. She was called in at christenings and funerals as a kind of insurance against the powers of darkness.

He comforted himself, as he opened the rickety gate, that she was always reckoned to be on the side of the angels.

"Come you in, Matthew," said a voice from the doorway.

Mother Sunday was a neat little woman, dressed as always in a brown silk frock to match her hair and twinkling eyes. In the tidy front parlour, there was no suggestion of broomsticks or black cats, only chintz curtains and a Scotch terrier.

Matthew looked at his boots for inspiration.

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"I heard as how you did give a Blessing to Tom and his Missus, and I did think how it would be a comfortable-like thing to have, ma'am."

"What had you in mind?" Mother Sunday inquired brightly.

Matthew slowly counted out three and elevenpence in pennies and halfpennies, and looked at her dumbly.

"Is that all you have?" He nodded miserably.

"Well, you're just lucky," she said. "I've got a cheap line in. You can have one for twopence."

Matthew pushed the two brightest pennies towards her and fumbled back the rest. "It won't arrive till tomorrow morning," she said. "You will be asleep."

He walked back to the village in a daze, muttering softly to himself, "A Blessing, a Blessing for Matthew."

Good people returning from church looked at him and then at each other, but they did not say anything, for he was a good carpenter. He did stop to look at the Duck, but it was a rule, like bacon for supper on Saturdays, that he should not visit it on a Sunday. Once at home, he put three and ninepence back in the vase and went to bed very early.

When he awoke next morning, he saw *it* at once. Perched on the vase was a small, fat, pink cherub with sprouty wings and shy, sleepy eyes.

Me own little Blessing, he thought, looking and looking, me own dear little soul. You'll be there shining and smiling at day's end, to talk to of an evening. Me own dear little Blessing.

He was very late leaving for the workshop, for breakfast and everything took so long when he couldn't take his eyes off the mantelpiece. The cherub remained curled cosily in the top of the vase, blinking drowsily and giving small contented snorts from time to time. Once when he ventured too close, it opened its blue eyes wide in alarm and shivered, so he took to moving carefully round it in a semicircle.

Once at work, he tried to think only of Tom's second cradle, but by dinner-time he could bear it no longer. Taking the food packet from his pocket, he hurried up the street at a rickety run, bread in one hand, cheese in the other. He was almost afraid to enter the hut when he did reach it for fear *it* should have gone, but no, *it* looked up as he entered, gave a small contented snort, and went back to cuddling itself.

On his way back, Matthew met Tom.

"Is cradle done?" Tom asked.

"Me own dear little Blessing," Matthew murmured, and passed on.

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During the afternoon, Dick the carrier came into the workshop to say he knew a man down Sticklepath way who had some oak going cheap. "What would I do with oak," said Matthew, "when I got cherub?"

Dick went away. Soon it was all round the village that the carpenter was gone quite cracked at last. It was being on his own so, they said.

Soon, one or two curious souls found excuses to visit the workshop, but all they could glean was that Matthew appeared to have been specially blessed by the vision of a cherub.

Matthew returned in the evening, never noticing the curious eyes turned on him as he passed the cottage windows. There *it* was, his own dear little Blessing. He sat and gazed and gazed, forgetting to light the fire or get any supper, until there was a knock at the door. It was Dick's Missus with a can of soup, an apple pie, and a little kindly curiosity. He stood on the threshold, barring the way.

"Brought you some soup, Matthew. It's a treacherous season, autumn. Let me come in and warm it up for you."

"Her don't want no one else. Her's mine, dear little soul," said Matthew indignantly.

Dick's Missus glanced over his shoulder into the hut and saw *it*, now cooing to itself like a well-fed baby. She dropped the soup and the pie, and looked and looked.

In the end, Matthew had to let her come inside. He picked up the pie which was still whole in its enamel dish, but the soup was trickling down towards the stream.

The cherub seemed perfectly happy to have a visitor. It even patted its little wings together and gave Matthew something like a wink.

"It's real!" Dick's Missus gasped. "You *have* got a cherub. You dear blessed man!" she whispered, gazing at him in awe.

Then she rushed out, back to the village, first to tell Dick, then Mrs. Cornish, Susie Petherick, and the Drews. Soon the entire village was talking of nothing else. Small groups began to gather in the street, and presently they moved off, as one man, in the direction of the carpenter's hut.

When they arrived on the firm turf inside the moor gate, Dick's Missus took charge.

"Now, we mustn't frighten little dear," she called out. "Better make one long line so as to stop at door one by one, pay respects, like, and pass on."

After ten minutes or so, the line was ready. Dick's Missus advanced to the door and knocked gently. Everyone held their breath, but had to let it go in the end as nothing happened.

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She knocked again, then called respectfully through the crack, "Matthew, will you let us just look in for a moment?"

Silence, though the lamplight flickered through the high slit windows.

"We'd be ever so quiet and careful," she tried again.

But still there was only silence, so in the end they all had to go home.

Next morning, Matthew could not decide what to do. He had hardly slept a wink for worrying whether his little dear would be safe, now that all those folk knew. There was no lock on the door, only a bolt on the inside. He tramped up and down the earth floor, rubbing his ears and looking at his boots, but never had the twelve lace-holes had less to say. Finally he stayed at home.

About twelve groups of people walked round the hut during the day, and he lost count of knocks on the door. By six o'clock he was desperately tired of it all, and longed only for a pint. Then he realized another calamity. His little dear was sitting on the Duck money.

When all seemed quiet, he went out to look at the moon, but it offered no more help than his boots.

Next day, he went to the workshop as usual, having piled several large rock slabs in front of the hut door, but it was no use.

He had to return five times even before dinner, just to see, and each time another rock had been pulled aside. At work he put in nails instead of screws and cut his right hand.

When Tom came in, Matthew was sitting on a baulk of wood, staring into space.

"Be cradle done, Matthew?" he asked.

"Cradle? Her don't need no cradle; her got vase," said Matthew. "Her got Duck money, too," he added thoughtfully.

Tom was a patient man, but he could see there would be no cradle till the cherub was banished. "You could ask Mother Sunday," he said.

"Her might be spiteful," Matthew muttered doubtfully.

Tom had another idea. "Why don't you see Rector, then?" he suggested, and went away.

Matthew chewed a shaving for some minutes, thinking of sleepless nights and Duck money, then he set off for the Rectory, where he was received gently, as if expected.

But once seated in the comfortable, shabby study, his tongue declined to move.

"Is it about your blessed visitation?" prompted the Rector.

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"No, 'tis about cherub, sir," Matthew mumbled. "She's a dear little soul, but I do be afrait to leave her. Folk do come, and she be sat on Duck money."

The Rector was thoughtful for a moment.

"Would you like to bring her—it, here, Matthew? I feel it would be fitting . . . and we should take it as a great honour."

"Me dear little soul," the carpenter fretted miserably, but he thought also of peace and quiet, of nails in their proper places, of a frothy tankard.

"Wouldn't it be best?" pressed the Rector gently.

In the end Matthew gave in, and it was arranged that the Rector should bring his car to the moor gate late that evening. He was also to bring a white vase.

Matthew went slowly home. He tried to explain to the cherub that it was best, but *it* only cooed and cuddled itself closer. Then he sat down dejectedly to wait.

When the time came, it was all incredibly easy. Cherub took one look at the proffered white vase and bounced happily onto it. The Rector then carried his odd burden back to the car, placed it carefully on the front seat, and drove slowly away.

Matthew stood desolately watching the rear light dwindle out of sight, then returned wearily to the hut. It seemed very dreary, very empty, but there was three and ninepence on the mantelpiece and no prowlers about the door. A pity the Duck was shut by now, but he could make up for it on the morrow. Perhaps there was something a bit queer about owning a cherub—all right for the Rector, of course. A nice game of darts now, three hundred and one up. He went to bed dreaming of double tops and treble nineteens.

But during the night he had another dream. In the morning he could only remember that it was something to do with Mother Sunday, blessings, and bootlace-holes.

When he opened his eyes, however, all was made plain, for sitting on the mantelpiece, shoulder to shoulder, were twelve cherubs; the face of the one on the vase seemed familiar.

They looked at Matthew and snorted delicately.

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THE BRONZE GOOD-BYE

BY VERNON SHERIDAN

THEY called it the bronze good-bye, this wind that beat and whirled through the narrow lanes by the harbour, slamming at the closed shutters of the warehouses and stirring the old bell at the quay into its deep, metallic clang.

Most years, it came towards the middle of October, " to blow away the tourist trash," according to Brésil, the old beggar who played his mandolin along the esplanade cafés through the season, till autumn drew in and he took up his winter position, in a corner of la Mère Martinou's. There he would sit, and from time to time, as if keeping in practice for the next year's visitors, he strummed a phrase or two of some American favourite, some familiar, out-of-date tune that would fill them with generous nostalgia for their GI days.

Sometimes, if the others offered him a drink, Brésil would play what they asked for, but after a few requests, he would retreat into some private memory again, moving his fingers softly, evocatively, over the strings: *Plaisir d'amour . . . ne dure qu'une heure . . .*

That night, however, old Brésil sat silent in his corner, and listened to the wind buffeting and shrieking, and to the distant alarm-note of the bronze bell.

" Hé," he sighed, " it comes early this year. Only September. Adieu les touristes, hein? "

La Mère Martinou looked up from her knitting, a long black stocking that finished—if it was ever finished—only to give place to the next long black stocking.

" Not only the tourists, this time," she said. " François is leaving tonight."

" Tant mieux," the old man muttered.

" The poor child will break her heart," the woman said, reproachfully, " when he goes."

" And if he stays, her brother will break his back."

" But Léo is in Marseilles. He knows nothing."

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Brésil picked up his mandolin, stroked it reflectively. The bead curtain by the door chattered as a gust of wind sneaked in through a crack. "He will have heard by now. Bad news travels fast, and bad men, too."

"Voyons, Léo is not bad. He is a good brother to her, he sends her money and brings her presents."

Brésil shrugged his shoulders. "And how does he get them? and those clothes he wears, the silk shirts—and that big red ring? You tell me, ma bonne, what an honest young clerk does in Marseilles to afford such things."

La Mère Martinou laughed, like the old niçoise she was. "You tell me what any honest man would be doing in Marseilles, anyway."

But Brésil seemed not to hear. His fingers strayed over the strings of his mandolin. "Léo has always been bad. With him, cruelty is a habit, like smoking, or drinking, or women. It is better for both if François goes."

Then, slowly, gently, he started to sing, "*Plaisir d'amour . . . ne dure . . .*" but the wind took over with its shrill scream that was like the whistle of an express train. La Mère Martinou shivered, and resumed her knitting of the endless black stocking.

Outside, in the spray-drenched night, the lamps flickered in the gusts of wind from the sea, and the shadows of inanimate things blew into life. A lamp-post struggled jaggedly across the cobbles and stroked at a door with an illuminated sign, CLUB ATLANTIS—DANCING.

Let me in, the wavering jet whispered, as the wind whirled down the alley, upsetting an orange tree in its tub and bowling it along the gutter. On the front, the squat palms flailed their papery leaves against the thunder of the breakers, and the hanging signs—*Mariline Modiste, Pension des Iles d'Or, Bobbie Coiffeur, Salon de Thé*—creaked and swung in a tempest of panic, through which sounded the diapason of the bell.

A girl's figure tacked along the front, oilskin coat bellying. As she was passing the terrace of the pension, there came a sudden crack and a trailer of roses fell loose from the trellis, caught in the girl's headscarf, and dragged at it. She struggled to dislodge the thorns, until finally a lash of wind, whipping against her cheek, snapped off the stalk. With a scraping sound, the branch blew back; the girl struggled round the corner, making for the square.

Once in the alley that wound in a tunnel-like curve from the front to the station, the girl was out of the vortex of the storm. Here were only the moaning of the wind and the echo of the

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sea's roar. Dazed with her struggle along the esplanade, she paused under a lamp, wiping her hand across her moist cheek, and felt at the drenched wool of her scarf.

Something fell, skidding down the gleaming oilskin onto the cobbles at her feet. She bent and picked it up. A small cluster of limp, almost black buds lay cradled in her palm.

The lamplight touched the long, wet lashes, shining against the gleaming pallor of her face, and the dark curve of the lips that almost smiled as the girl closed her hand gently around the flowers and hurried on.

The alley widened into a street, which slanted to meet the blast of the wind again. Hugging the house-fronts, the girl struggled against it; then, hearing the chime of a clock, broke into a run. At the far end of the street, a figure was approaching, the broad shoulders and exaggerated brim of the hat outlined against the mist of light that was the square ahead.

The girl hesitated, then drew quickly into the shadow of a deep doorway, cowering back into its recess, the collar of her raincoat pressed across her face. The slow, unsteady tread advanced—as she caught its uneven rhythm, she relaxed. The man drew level, and passed, swaying down the street.

Noiselessly, she detached herself from the sheltering shadow and hurried on. Up in the place de la Gare, where the storm lost some of its force, one or two groups were still dawdling. Three men stood on the pavement by a café; one bent his head to the flare of a match cupped in his hands. There was a spattering hiss as it struck the wet pavement.

Two women walked past, talking; the wind tossed their phrases together so that it seemed as if each was reciting the same soliloquy, one prompting the other.

"—I said to him, it is always the same with you men—"

"—for all of them—"

"—belly and bed—"

A low whistle interrupted. The girl looked around. It seemed to have come from the shadows at the corner of the square and the ruelle du Vieux-Port, there where the wind had torn away the lower corner of a large poster for vinegar. The poster's giant hand was still there, but the bottle it stretched out for had been ripped away, and the loose edge flapped and undulated. Underneath the enormous, moving paper hand, a young man stood, his cloth cap low on his forehead, the collar of his short leather coat turned up.

She moved towards him, slowly at first, as if some fear held her back; then a sudden gust drove her across the pavement into the doorway and his arms.

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"You are late." His voice vibrated across her temple; she felt the words rather than heard them.

"I came by the front," she explained.

He touched her face, half buried now in his coat, and pushed back the scarf. Her long, pale hair blew about his face like smoke.

"You shouldn't have gone that way," he murmured through its soft, enveloping cloud. "It is dangerous on a night like this."

"It is quicker. And I kept to the houses."

His hand slid across the smooth oilskin shoulder and closed round hers where it lay, clenched, on his breast. "What are you holding so tightly?"

She turned her head, and then she smiled. "Look," she whispered. "They broke off as I passed the terrace of the pension. Take them."

He laughed. "*I* should be bringing *you* flowers. I shall, too, next time." He pushed the little cluster of buds into his buttonhole. "What would Mademoiselle prefer? Dark red roses, or one single orchid like the tourist women wear on gala nights?"

She stood back, smiling, shaking her head. "You are so confident. Are you never afraid, François?"

He drew her hand through his arm and led her down the street, back towards the sea. "What is there to be afraid of?"

"Léo—" she began, but he laughed again.

"Léo is in Marseilles," he said. "Dancing some wealthy foreign widow round and round and round, till she is dizzy with infatuation and she cries—"

"No, don't—" her voice rose desperately, but he swept her along the street, in waltz time, while his voice reeled gaily on in an infectious, absurd contralto: "'Léo,' she cries, 'accept this small token of my esteem . . . and affection.' And what do you think it is?"

Stopping abruptly where a lamp sloped its light on her face, he raised her chin in his hand. She shook her head again, wanting to cry, but finding instead that she was laughing. He bent down, his own eyes flecked with mirth.

"A great blood-red ruby, cut in the shape of a broken heart. Ah, ma petite, you don't see the like of that in the Prix Unic . . ." Then, suddenly grave, he added, "I love you, Marie."

"Yes," she said quietly, but the wind and her returning fear pushed her voice upwards again as she cried, "But, François, you must be careful. You must believe me—"

He grew impatient then. "Ah, Marie, stop it. For heaven's sake, what can he do? You are going to marry me when my apprenticeship is over, and we shall go away from here, so what

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can Léo do? And why? You can't even tell me why he should want to harm us—"

"I have tried to tell you," she said miserably, almost running to keep pace with his angry stride. "Léo has always enjoyed—being cruel. To everyone. To Maman, even when she was so ill, towards the end. To old Sophie. I am sure he is cruel to his rich old women, too—"

"Well, we don't have to worry about them. They probably like it—lord knows, they must pay him enough."

"If he hears about us," she went on, "I know he will do something—something terrible. I have no one to help me, now Sophie is so old."

"Listen, Marie," and he took her arm again, "if you are afraid he will do something to you—"

"No," she whispered, but the roar of the wind blew her word away.

"I'll go and see Pierre. His boat will not be out on a night like this. I can get hold of him at the harbour. He'll look after you and let me know if Léo threatens to do anything. But what is it you think he would do—beat you?"

She shook her head. "He might—make me go with him. He has said, often, that he could use me there."

François considered this. "Well," he said at last, "Pierre is a good friend; he will help."

"Let me come with you."

"No, you have had enough of the storm for tonight. You go and wait for me at la Mère Martinou's. I'll fetch you there when I have spoken to Pierre, and we can go to the station together. The train leaves at ten, so there is still more than an hour. Sophie will not be worrying?"

"She knows I am with you. François . . ."

"Yes?"

She wanted to explain, to excuse her fears. But the clock started to chime, and the wind hurled its mockery around her. It was as if in its violence she could feel François's impatience, could hear his derisive, unbelieving "Marie! You exaggerate—You *look* for sorrow . . ."

She raised her eyes to him, standing tall and confident, unshaken by the turmoil of the storm, smiling down at her.

"Yes?" he repeated.

She would put away the rest; she would, for once, hope and believe and trust. "Kiss me," she said, smiling back at him.

"That," he laughed, "is the first sensible thing you have said for a long time!"

Their shadows merged to form a black pool on the glistening

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cobbles. " It won't be long, Marie. Six months, and then . . ." His fingers pushed back a damp tendril of her hair, and stroked the chill softness of her cheek and throat. " Don't *worry*, my darling. Six months isn't a lifetime, after all."

The clock had stopped chiming nine. " Come," he said, " I must find Pierre. You will wait at la Mère Martinou's? "

She nodded.

" Alors, à bientôt." He bent down and kissed her lightly on the lips.

She stood motionless, watching him stride down the alley towards the sea. At the foot, he turned and waved, calling again, " A bientôt." Then the full force of the wind struck, threw the echo of his gay call back to her, and he was gone.

She turned away towards la Mère Martinou's, too soon to see a broad-shouldered figure, wearing a wide-brimmed hat, and a long dark overcoat, step out from a doorway and move—swiftly and steadily, this time—down the alley in the direction of the harbour.

There were few clients at la Mère Martinou's; the storm had kept most people at home or driven them farther inland. Two old men were playing checkers in one corner, and Madame Boutet from the pâtisserie next door sat at a table by the bar, a damp black shawl thrown over the back of her chair, talking to the patronne.

Old Brésil dozed resignedly, for the only tourists in the place were two gaunt anglaises who, bundled like cellophane-wrapped vegetables in their plastic capes, looked as if they would have no memories for his mandolin to evoke. They were sipping pernod, with more determination than pleasure, and their pale aquatint eyes travelled suspiciously from native to native.

" Queer lot, aren't they? " said the one in a knitted cap.

" I suppose the season's over, really, Maud," the other replied. " This weather . . . We should have come earlier."

" Yes. Next time perhaps we can go to one of the bigger places, too. This is just a little quiet, don't you think, Gwen? "

" Oh, I don't know. I always feel it's in places like this one gets to know the real France, you know. I mean, look at all these—" and she took a sip of the wicked little glass—" they might have stepped right out of a French film, mightn't they? —Gracious! " The door flung open and there was a moment's strident pandemonium—clamour of wind and sea, sharp drum-tap of rain, wild rattle of the bead curtain—before Marie could get it closed again. She entered and paused a moment, shaking back her rain-glossy hair, and smiling at the patronne.

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" Hé, Marie! Ça va? "

She nodded. " I am waiting for someone."

Madame Boutet's round black eyes gleamed like the buttons on a child's party shoes. " No need to ask who that is, hein? "

There was no answer from Marie except another shy smile, and a brief glow of pleasure that lit up her face.

" Come, now, sit down over here—" and la Mère Martinou led her to a table near the stove. " A little omelette? Or a slice of jambon? And take off your coat, Marie—you are soaked."

Marie shook her head, and placed her hand over the old woman's as it laid a knife and fork in front of her. " Ah no, madame, I shall not be waiting long. Nothing for me."

" Careful, child, that knife is sharp! A little cognac, then? "

As nothing else would satisfy the patronne, Marie nodded, and la Mère Martinou went behind the bar.

" Voilà," she said, returning with a glass, which she set in front of the girl, " you drink this. It will make your body as warm as your heart."

The two tourists, studying her with interest, decided that she bore little resemblance, really—other than her black oilskin coat—to any heroine that they had seen at Sunday film societies. Far too thin and messy, and that bedraggled mane of hair . . .

Brésil watched her, too, hoping that she might have joined him, for he remembered her when, all skinny legs and straight mouse fringe, she would badger him with the imperiousness of six years to sing " à moi seule, Brésil." Until that lout of a brother would haul her off, pinching her arm and asking her stormily what she was doing. And her wailing " Ri-en, Léo . . . ri-en! " came lilting back to him across the sands and the years, like a seabird's cry.

But Marie had not noticed him. She sat, her hands folded quietly on her lap, her eyes reflective and, at last, content. She was glad that she had not told him all the things that made her afraid, things he couldn't know—Maman weeping over a beloved, broken memento, while Léo leaned against the door, smiling . . . *Now, Maman, it's only an old, chipped cup—I'll buy you a fine new set. You know that* . . . And Sophie's small white dog that was found in the road, limp and discoloured, its back broken.

She was even glad that she hadn't reminded him of what he seemed to have forgotten: that other autumn, that other storm when Martin had disappeared, and his body was washed up, days later, at Le Lavandou—Martin, who had just married Léo's first girl-friend, Toinette.

After a while, she glanced at the clock that ticked noisily behind the bar. Twenty past. The shutters thudded desultorily as

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the gusts from the sea caught them obliquely. The voice of Madame Boutet bubbled on, interrupted only by la Mère Martinou's rich laugh. Brésil had closed his eyes again.

Marie lowered her head. Too soon for him to return. The seal-wet coat shone in the light; from above, the outline of her body seemed to her like the contours on the map of some new world. In six months' time . . .

The two old men finished their game and rose. There came the thick squeak of oilskins being put on, the chorus of " Bonsoir, mesdames," " Bonsoir, bonsoir," and then the struggle with the door and the rage of the wind.

Marie did not raise her head, so far away and lost was she in her dreaming. She neither saw him enter, nor heard the silence that fell on the room.

The first warning she had was when a shadow fell across her table, and a hand, loosely curving in on itself, appeared within her line of vision. A broad white hand, made the more livid by a large, square-cut ruby ring.

There was no need to look up.

" Waiting for someone? "

Weariness swept over her, and fear and despair; she felt herself drift, like something drowned, in their relentless swell. Her head dropped forward in what might have been only a nod.

" I'm afraid it'll be a long wait." The voice was low and toneless. " A very long wait." And the fingers uncurved, releasing on the tabletop a small cluster of crushed black roses.

She stared blankly at the flowers, made as if to touch them, then withdrew her hand—*Careful, child, that knife is sharp.*

He sat down opposite her. She raised her eyes to his face and whispered, " You've killed him." It was a statement, not a question; it was something she had known all her life.

" There was an accident. On a night like this, one should not go strolling by the harbour. Everyone knows that." He picked up her cognac and emptied the glass.

" Don't," she said, " I wanted—"

He patted her hand where it lay, halfway to the flowers, beside the knife. " There's more where that came from."

She watched him go over to the counter, where he talked and laughed with la Mère Martinou. She watched him turn and say a few words in English to the two tourists, who became suddenly vivacious. She watched him so intently that it seemed as if the hand on the cloth moved of its own volition.

Slightly to the right, until it touched the knife; fingers closing round the wooden handle; a second's flash as the light caught the blade. The knife had gone.

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When he returned with the cognac, she was sitting back in her chair, one hand deep in the pocket of her coat. He put the glass down, saying, " Quickly, now. I want to see you home before I get the train back."

Obediently, she gulped it down. Then, without looking at him, she rose. He took her arm gently—almost caressingly—and led her out.

Madame Boutet gasped. " Was she waiting for *him*? I thought—"

" Tais-toi, Henriette! " came from la Mère Martinou. " It is better not to discuss these things." She picked up her knitting, but her eyes remained fixed on the table where the knife had been.

And in his corner, old Brésil reached for his mandolin; his fingers strummed nervously, as if undecided or reluctant. He started to hum the melody, then broke into the final words: " *Chagrin d'amour dure toute la vi . . . i . . . e.*"

A little burst of applause came from the tourists: things were beginning to brighten up. " There's nothing like a little music," said Gwen, and Maud nodded until the bobble on her woolly cap bounced, roguish and incongruous, against her bun.

Brésil was surprised at their enthusiasm, but decided to profit by it. He bowed, smiling at them, and started the song again: " *Plaisir d'amour . . . ne dure qu'une heure . . .*"

★ ★ ★

SIAMESE CATS

But what are their faults compared with their virtues—with their sense of humour, their fidelity, their dauntless courage (unless they think they've seen a ghost, when they will tear away like so many animated brushes), their playfulness (they will retrieve a piece of paper as many times as you will throw it for them), their conversational powers (if you have Siamese cats you must talk to them a lot), their awareness of themselves so that each one of my eleven knows its own name, their love of people rather than place ; their honesty (by which I mean they'll take a lobster off the table in front of you), their continuous passionate interest in all that is going on around them, and their depth of affection, which they are able to show in so many exquisite ways?

COMPTON MACKENZIE

Cats are a mysterious kind of folk. There is more passing in their minds than we are aware of.

WALTER SCOTT

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CORNETS' NEST

The sheep's in the meadow,
the cow's in the corn

While you are listening
To the clear horn
Forget, men, everything
On this earth newborn,
Except it is lovelier
Than any mysteries.
Open your eyes to the air
That has washed the eyes of the stars
Through all the dewy night;
Up with the light,
To the old wars;
Arise, arise!

EDWARD THOMAS, *The Trumpet*

Wood-Wind

" At Lariki," said the Count, " there is hung, in the ceiling of the gateway, a hunting-horn in an iron chain. My grandfather's grandfather was a man of herculean strength. When in the evening he rode through the gate, he used to take hold of the horn, and, lifting himself and his horse from the ground, he blew it. I have known that I could do the same, but I thought I should never ride through that gate. Athena might do it, too," he added thoughtfully.

He refilled his glass. " How is it that you came here today? " he asked Boris, beaming upon him and his gala uniform, as if his coming had been a unique exploit. " What brings you to Hop-ballehus? " Boris felt the old man's openness reflected in his own heart, like a blue sky in the sea. He looked into his friend's

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face. " I came here today," he said, " to ask Athena to marry me." The old man gave him a great luminous glance . . .

" I give you, in Athena, the key of my whole world. Athena," he repeated, as if it gave him joy to pronounce his daughter's name, " is herself like a hunting-horn in the woods." And as if, without knowing it himself, some strange and sad memory of his youth had taken possession of him, he added, almost in a whisper, " Dieu ! que le son du cor est triste au fond des bois ! "

While they had been talking, a strong wind had sprung up outside. The day had been still. This blowing weather had come up with the dusk, like an animal of the night. It swept along the long walls, around the corners of the house, and whirled the dead leaves up in the air. In the midst of it, Athena, who had been outspanning the horse from Pastor Rosenquist's trap in the stables, was heard to cross the terrace and come up the stairs.

ISAK DINESEN, *The Monkey*

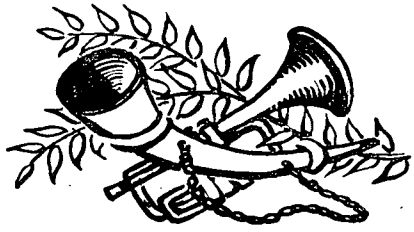
Post-Horn Gallop

O wind thy horn, thou proud fellow
Of thee I have no doubt
I wish that thou give such a blast
Till both thy eyes fall out.

The first blast that he did blow
He blew both loud and shrill
A hundred and fifty of Robin Hood's men
Came riding over the hill.

" O who are yon," the Sheriff he said
" Come tripping over the lee? "
" They're my attendants," brave Robin did say
" They'll pay a visit to thee."

Author Unknown, Robin Hood and the Widow's Three Sons



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Hunting-Horn

Every day Sir Tristram would go ride a-hunting, for Sir Tristram was that time called the best chaser of the world, and the noblest blower of an horn of all manner of measures; for as books report, of Sir Tristram came all the good terms of venery and hunting, and all the sizes and measures of blowing of an horn; and of him we had first all the terms of hawking, and which were beasts of chase and beasts of venery, and which were vermins, and all the blasts that long to all manner of games. First to the uncoupling, to the seeking, to the rechate, to the flight, to the death, and to strake, and many other blasts and terms, that all manner of gentlemen have cause to the world's end to praise Sir Tristram, and to pray for his soul.

SIR THOMAS MALORY, *Le Morte D'Arthur*

Fairy Brass

O hark, O hear! how thin and clear,
And thinner, clearer, farther going!
O sweet and far from cliff and scar
The horns of Elfland, faintly blowing!
Blow, let us hear the purple glens replying:
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

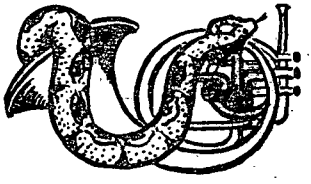
ALFRED TENNYSON, *The Princess*

Serpent-Horn

Lord Merlin wandered round with his tea-cup. He picked up a book, which Fabrice had given Linda the day before, of romantic nineteenth-century poetry.

"Is this what you're reading now?" he said. "'Dieu! que le son du cor est triste au fond des bois!' I had a friend, when I lived in Paris, who had a boa constrictor as a pet, and this boa constrictor got itself inside a French horn. My friend rang me up in a fearful state, saying: 'Dieu! que le son du boa est triste au fond du cor!' I've never forgotten it."

NANCY MITFORD, *The Pursuit of Love*



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HEARTH-EYE

BY JOHN MASTERS

"Work in the winter, keep summer for pleasuring" is the enviable maxim by which John Masters lives—and this despite the responsibilities entailed by a wife, two children, and a contract to write thirty-five novels covering the history of the British in India! The fifth generation of his family to serve there, he fought on the North-West Frontier and with Wingate in Burma, retiring as Lt.-Colonel, D.S.O., O.B.E.

He now lives in a farmhouse some forty miles outside New York City.

THE trees were fairly thick in the wood beyond Mr. Coote's farm, and it was getting late one summer's evening, and so, for a second, I didn't really think it was an elephant.

We were scrambling through the bracken because it made a short cut home, but I don't remember now what we'd been doing beforehand. I think Ned had been planning a raid on the Havering boys but he hadn't told me. He never liked to talk about his plans until they had matured. Ned is one of my elder brothers. At this time I was nine and he was twelve.

What I saw was an elephant's ears flapping on either side of a thin tree, and then an elephant's small eye and a short tusk.

I looked away and kept on struggling in Ned's wake through the wood. There was no sense in disturbing him and perhaps causing him to stop and see the elephant for himself. Quite apart from that, sooner or later he would mention to Mummy that we'd seen an elephant in the wood and then she'd give us a dose of medicine. I knew very well there was an elephant there, and I saw no reason why there should not be. It is only grown-ups who distort observed facts to fit the pattern of their set ideas.

Fifty feet farther on Ned stopped and turned round. He took off his glasses, and said carelessly, "There was an elephant back there, Johnny."

I said, "I know, Ned. He was only a little one."

This annoyed my brother, and he snapped, "Biggest elephant I ever saw!"

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I said, "Mummy will be waiting for us to have supper." As a matter of fact, the elephant we'd seen was not large, but nor was it far away, and I didn't want to talk about it.

Ned peered back into the wood. We could hear the elephant pulling off branches and munching them.

Ned muttered, "I wonder where it came from?" His eyes took on a familiar gleam as he put on his glasses again, and he said, "That's a circus elephant. It's tame."

I thought he was probably right, because my teacher had not said anything about elephants being native to this part of the country; but then, teachers did not know everything.

Ned repeated, "A circus elephant. From Mossop's Mammoth Circus. Before that—I wonder . . ." He took a deep breath and walked hesitantly a few paces towards the munching noise. Then he called out in a low and strangely sonorous voice: "Hearth-Eye! *Aihai*, my lord in the chains! *Salaam karo!*" He sounded as if he'd got a potato in his mouth.

I recognized the name Hearth-Eye all right. It was the name of an elephant who was the friend of a boy called Mowgle-Eye in *The Jungle Book*. The boy Mowgle-Eye lived in India and didn't wear any clothes. There was another boy in the book, too, called Toom-Eye, who rode on another elephant and took it dancing with him. It was at least two years since we'd had that book read aloud to us, but we'd very much envied Mowgle-Eye, Toom-Eye, and the Law, and Ned had a good memory.

Ned claimed, later, that he was really terrified when he went back and called to the elephant, but I do not think he was afraid at all. He was far too interested in his Hindu words and wondering whether the elephant had really come from India and knew our other friends in the book.

Ned was not even frightened when the elephant came out from behind his tree and swung slowly towards us. Nor was I, because the elephant seemed at ease and unworried. It felt all over Ned with its trunk, found a few biscuit crumbs in one pocket, and ate them. Then it came to me, and I hoped it would not be annoyed when it discovered I had nothing to eat in my pockets.

While it searched me, Ned patted what parts of it he could reach and talked to it in his sonorous, potato-voice Hindu: "*Ai!* Thou art Hearth-Eye. Thy servants have nothing to give thee, alas. *Arré!* Farewell!"

He turned to me, saying, "He understands . . .Well, let's go home." I agreed, and we continued on our way.

It will be no surprise to the reader that elephants can move almost soundlessly; but it was a big surprise to us when, in the middle of Mr. Coote's lower field, something made us turn our

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heads and we found the elephant hard on our heels. I whispered, " Shoo! go home! " but the elephant only waited, waving his trunk, for us to move on again.

Ned said, " Let's take him home."

I said, " There's no room for him." I didn't mention it but I also remembered well, and thought that Ned would, the fuss Father had made the year before over a mere badger that we'd tried to keep as a pet.

Ned said, " We'll tie him up, send a telegram to the circus, and get a reward."

It was just about dark by then, and Hearth-Eye, possibly from impatience, was breathing heavily, shuffling his feet, and blowing through his trunk behind us.

Ned intoned, " *Arré!* Move thou forward . . .Oh, come *on*! " and our procession moved on once more.

I'm pretty sure Ned intended to lead Hearth-Eye up to our front door, call Father, enjoy the surprise and the congratulations and the excitement, and then dump the elephant in Father's lap, so to speak.

Personally, I thought he was over-estimating our parents' staunchness to elephants: and how did he know that the first person to come out wouldn't be Daisy the cook, who was frightened of cows? So it was rather to my relief that Hearth-Eye, sniffing the warm summer air, smelt a good smell and shuffled off until he came to Mr. Coote's barn.

Mr. Coote was a small farmer. He had two sons in their teens, and his farm was just about opposite ours. His cows and the horse were out in the field, I knew, so there would be nothing in the barn but hay and oats and potatoes and boxes of apples and barrels of draught cider and piles of old harness. I don't think Mr. Coote could read and I doubt if he had heard of cross-pollination or selective stock-breeding. He just worked hard, got drunk most Saturdays, and lived well.

The field door of the barn was shut and bolted. Hearth-Eye waited patiently. Ned opened the gate into the yard, clucked, whistled, and spoke more Hindu, but Hearth-Eye only blew through his trunk. Either he didn't understand, or he did but knew what he wanted. Mr. Coote's little terrier, Lady, heard the noises, though, and trotted up to investigate. She did not bark because she'd smelt us and she used to like us—before this, that is.

I think it said in that book about Mowgle-Eye that elephants are afraid of little dogs, but that is not universally true. Hearth-Eye didn't move his feet, or do anything to threaten Lady. He sort of leaned over her and, if the light had been better, I would

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have said he leered. Anyway, Lady turned and dashed back towards the house and never even whined or barked. That was really the last time Ned or I saw Lady, close to. After that, when she saw either of us, she'd run away and hide.

I think that at this point Ned ought to have gone openly to Father or Mr. Coote and confessed that we'd found an elephant and didn't know what to do with it. I say " confess " advisedly; I knew that really it was Hearth-Eye's fault for being in the wood when he ought to have been with the circus, but I also knew that we would be blamed merely because he wasn't a rabbit or a bird —at any rate something more humdrum in size or conventional in shape.

But I have already mentioned that Ned's only weakness was a tendency to overplay his hand. He now said, " We'll keep him in Mr. Coote's barn for the night. I was going to suggest it to Father anyway."

He slipped through an open window, shot the bolts from the inside, and opened the door. Hearth-Eye walked in.

There was plenty of room. There may have been some fowls in there but they kept quiet.

" Now we'd better go and tell Mr. Coote," I said, my voice fading even as I spoke. My tongue was never very facile and just then I couldn't find the right words to tell Mr. Coote that we'd let a smallish elephant into his barn.

" Yes, in a minute," Ned said. " But we've got to give Hearth-Eye something to eat."

" Why? "

" Because he'll tear the place down if we don't, stupid."

I climbed up the ladder and started pushing whatever there was up there over the edge onto the lower floor. I could not see clearly what was going down, but I made sure that Hearth-Eye would not starve.

Then something gave way—not the floor, but the hay and things under my feet—and more hay and potatoes and several solid objects, including me, all fell down on and round Hearth-Eye. I got up quickly and hurried out of the barn with Ned.

At the door I looked back: I said it was dark, and it was; but perhaps we'd got used to it. At all events, I certainly remember, at this moment of writing, that Hearth-Eye was standing stomach deep in a sea of food and beginning to turn it over with his short tusks to see where to start. We bolted the door and crept out of the window. A minute later and we were home, wild eyed, covered with cobwebs, and smelling peculiar.

We were scolded, fed, and sent to bed. Our brothers and sisters could tell from Ned's face that he had a Plan, but they did

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not get an opportunity to find out what it was. I shared a bedroom with Ned and I knew he had a Plan and I could perhaps have found out what it was, but I thought I knew: tomorrow Ned would bet all our family that there wasn't an elephant in Mr. Coote's barn and, of course, when they went to look, there would be Hearth-Eye.

I went happily to sleep.

We were up very early in the morning. We hurried across the road, round the side of the Cootes's house, and into the barn through a window. No one saw us except Lady, who yapped once and dived into the house.

Hearth-Eye was there in the barn, standing up in one corner. He looked wonderful. The barn didn't look bad either, considering. Nothing was really broken. Hearth-Eye had pushed a cart over and obviously he'd been rummaging around, and I must say I'd never realized that elephants could eat so much.

He didn't move for quite a time, and at last I said, "Ned, I think he's asleep."

"Elephants always sleep on their feet," he snapped. "We mustn't wake him too suddenly."

There was a sound of footsteps. Ned stiffened and whispered, "Shhh!" and we crouched down out of sight.

Mr. Coote opened the far door of his barn—the yard door—cleared his throat, cursed the rusty bolt, and stumped in. He was whistling rather lugubriously to himself. He was never too happy first thing in the morning. Still whistling, he came halfway up the barn, and pottered over some harness, and then I imagine he must have thought he'd seen an elephant, because he stopped whistling and the clump of his boots checked for a second. Then he turned round and walked away and we heard him muttering under his breath, and then the mournful whistling began again. I suppose he had said—to himself—"You know, for a second, that looked like an elephant in there."

Sure enough, before he left the barn he had to have a second look, just to remind himself how extraordinarily elephantlike the shadows in the far corner had been.

That time he began to swear, and we heard his boots moving fast away from us. I was trying to remember the words he was using so that I could spring them on Billy Havering in Sunday School the following week, so I was quite disappointed when Ned jumped up and cried, "Mr. Coote, the elephant is asleep."

I suppose it did sound like a meaningless rebuke rather than the reassuring piece of information that Ned intended. At all events, Mr. Coote stopped at the far door, rattled the bolt once

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or twice, and then came towards us at a shambling run, his face quite purple with rage and relief. He was yelling at the top of his voice but I can't remember what he said, except, " Might have frightened Mrs. Coote," and, " I'll teach you." He took a running leap and gave Hearth-Eye a big kick in the stomach.

Of course, Hearth-Eye himself was part of the cause of the misunderstanding, because he stood so still in his sleep. Partly, too, it is true that the light was not good at that end of the barn. But I am convinced that Mr. Coote himself must shoulder the major part of the blame. It was simply another example of the grown-up person's refusal to credit anything, however strongly supported by the evidence of the senses or the reason, that conflicts with his long-fossilized beliefs. In this case, Mr. Coote had concluded that Hearth-Eye was a dummy elephant, a thing of cloth and straw.

I would not care to follow his logic in its entirety, but it would probably have gone something like this: I see in my barn a thing that looks like an elephant; but there are no elephants in this country, therefore what I see cannot be an elephant; and besides the " elephant," I see the Middleton boys, who are given to all manner of mischief ; therefore I can assume that the " elephant " is a dummy and that the Middleton boys put it in my barn as a practical joke.

Be that as it may, when Mr. Coote kicked Hearth-Eye in the stomach, Hearth-Eye woke up and proved beyond doubt, I think, that elephants are the kindest and gentlest of God's creatures. When there was so much that he might have done, he only gathered himself together and trumpeted. This was bad enough. I do not know whether you have ever heard an elephant's trumpet. If not, please accept my assurance that it is the loudest, most screeching, blaring, bellowing, and utterly unnerving noise on earth

Ned, Mr. Coote, and I did not get a chance to sort ourselves out, one from the other, until we reached the middle of the yard. Lady darted from the house and rushed out across the fields. The faces of Mrs. Coote and her younger son appeared at the kitchen window. The elder Coote boy ran out of the front door with a shotgun in his hands.

Mr. Coote, in a tone of outraged belief, said, " It's an elephant."

Ned began talking quickly. He explained where we'd found Hearth-Eye, and that he was tame and how—but not why—we had put him in the barn

While Ned talked he led Mr. Coote, by soothing parallels, back to the door of the barn. We three stood there, looking at Hearth-Eye, who seemed to have gone to sleep again.

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The elder Coote boy called out from the middle of the yard, "What's the matter, Dad?"

Mr. Coote said shortly, "There's an elephant in the barn, that's all."

I think now that he spoke sarcastically, but then it seemed a straight answer to a straight question, and the elder Coote boy thought so too. He said, "Arrh," put up his gun, and went back into the house to finish his breakfast. We heard him telling his mother and his younger brother that there was an elephant in the barn.

Ned now told me to watch Hearth-Eye while he went round the corner and talked privately with Mr. Coote. When they returned, Mr. Coote was slapping his thighs and saying, "I'll do it, Ned. You're a great boy. Darned if I don't think you'll be Prime Minister one day!"

Ned hurried me away. I asked him where we were going, and he said, "You'll see." I asked him what we were doing, and he said, "You'd better not know. You can't keep a secret. Only, remember, *you don't know anything about any elephant.*"

I told him that, on the contrary, I had just been watching an elephant in Mr. Coote's barn, but Ned pshawed in disgust, and then we arrived at the Flahertys's house and the Plan went into action.

During the next four hours we visited all our friends, enemies, and acquaintances. At each house Ned opened a conversation at random, swung it quickly to the circus, and a few minutes later goaded the opposition into placing bets that he, Ned, mounted on an elephant, would not, within a week, lead the circus procession round the ring under the big top right there in our village.

I should explain that Mossop's Mammoth Circus, which usually came to our village, had this year decided to play only at Woodscroft, fifteen miles away. It was in Woodscroft now—a fact that Ned had remembered when he first saw Hearth-Eye in the wood—and from there was going up north.

So it will be understood that it was not too difficult to persuade our friends to bet on what they regarded as a certainty. The core of Ned's feat lay in that he goaded the boys to weight the odds against themselves, that he wasted no time, and that he aroused no suspicions in minds that had long been very suspicious of him.

By dinner-time he stood to lose all his money (12s. 6d.) and, over my protests, all mine (7s. 2½d.), a total of 19s. 8½d. Against this we hoped to win £868 14s. 6d., and we held signed slips for that amount. Personally, I did not think that Billy Havering for

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one would be able to meet his obligations. He wouldn't get more than half-a-crown for his half-tamed rat and perhaps five bob for his scout knife, while he would owe us £5.

After dinner we hurried to the station. The train from Woodscroft got in about half past one. Only two passengers got off it. One was a small man wearing a tweed suit, a brown cap, and startlingly bright tan boots. The other was a dark-skinned man, with bare legs and feet, who wore nothing but a white towel round his middle, and an unbuttoned overcoat, and carried a big whip. The coat was a tweed one with a cape on the shoulders, like the one Sherlock Holmes wore, and I thought the dark man must be very hot in it, but I am sure he wore it only because some ladies might be shocked that he did not have a proper suit on.

Ned went forward and said, "Are you from the circus, sir?"

The small man said, blusteringly, but pretending that he was a great friend of ours, "Yes, my boy! And your Dad's got our Jane. Have a cigar?" Grinning, he thrust out a cigar which was about ten inches long.

Ned took the cigar, put it in his pocket, and said, "Thank you, sir. Who is Jane?"

The man looked cross. The cigar must have cost him quite a lot, perhaps half-a-crown. He said, "The elephant."

Ned said, "Oh yes, Jane." I could see he was rather shocked that there should be girl elephants. So was I. He quickly recovered himself, though, and said, "We have her, sir. He—she is well."

The man said, "Nice going, boy! Lead us to her."

Ned said, "Yes, sir . . . But there is the question of the damage she has caused."

"Damage? She wouldn't hurt a flea. You just take us to her quick, and here's a tip for you, sonny." He held out a ten-shilling note.

"She's done a terrible lot of damage, sir, and there's her keep, too," Ned said, pocketing the tip. "We'd want at least five pounds."

The small man roared and yelled and tried to twist Ned's arm, but Ned managed to wriggle free. The dark man watched morosely, doing nothing, and Ned appealed to him in his fruity Hindu to make his partner see reason, saying a lot of things that sounded like *Hut* and *Kissy waste* and *Syce*, and a lot of other words he'd learned out of that book about Mowgle-Eye and Toom-Eye, but I think the fellow was an impostor because he said, "Ain't no use, Charlie. You'll have to give these little beggars what they ask for. We've got to have Jane before we move on."

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Finally the small man handed over a very crumpled five-pound note. I'm sure he expected to pay at least that much because he had a lot of notes on him. Then he snarled, "Now, lead us to the elephant, you little swindler."

"Thank you, sir," Ned said quietly. "Now, how much was the reward?"

The small man took off his cap, threw it on the ground and jumped on it. The naked fellow took a cut at me with his whip and made me dance, but Ned stood still.

At last the small man said, "How much do you want?"

Ned said, all in one breath, "We don't want any money but the circus must come here and you've got to let me lead the procession round the ring riding on Hearth-Eye if not we won't tell you where he—she is."

The small man went through his act again except that he couldn't jump on his cap because he had ruined it the first time, and the naked man couldn't let out with his whip because quite a crowd had collected by then.

The real turning-point came when Mr. Black, the ticket-collector, said to the small man, "What's the matter with that, then? There's plenty of people here who want to see the circus but can't get to Woodscroft. Do we have to hold you smart lads down while we put money in your pockets?"

The small man quietened at once when he heard the word money, and he pretended that they'd always wanted to bring the circus to our village but couldn't fit it into their itinerary. Of course, actually, they hadn't made much money the year before when they came, but that was because it was the day Mrs. Slack's house burnt down, which was better than a circus, really.

After that, Ned and I had no more trouble, not even when Ned said he wouldn't let the circus people have the elephant until the big top was up. The small man was nearly wailing as he said, "But, sir, we can't put the big top up without Jane, I mean Hearth-Eye."

But Ned would not relent, and I think the small man was only making excuses, so in the end everything was agreed and the circus was going to play in our village the very next day.

The whole town knew by now where the elephant was, and Mr. Coote made good money that evening letting people in at a shilling a time to see her in the barn.

Father and Mummy knew we were mixed up with the elephant, of course, but Mr. Coote pretended that we had really been acting only as his agents, because it was better to deal with these show people through intermediaries and not display your hand

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too early, and Father finished up jolly proud of us though puzzled as to why Ned kept asking him what he would do if he suddenly came into a fortune.

No one was at all frightened of Hearth-Eye; in fact, several people said, when they saw her lolling in the barn knee-deep in hay and apples and surrounded by admiring men, that the trouble would be to get her out of there and back to work.

In attempting to relate the events of the next day I will not break the thread of my narrative to assess and distribute responsibility for what was, in some ways, a lamentable disappointment for us.

I must, however, say again that Ned's tendency to overdo things must bear some share of the blame. After all, he didn't have to bet that he would ride an elephant round the ring. A proposition framed in more general terms would have earned him, if at a slightly lower rate, a more certain return.

The naked man in the tweed overcoat, whose name was Jack Fisher, or Ali, came to our house at one o'clock in the afternoon. Ned was to ride Hearth-Eye, Ali to lead her, and I to follow her, carrying a banner.

Hearth-Eye was asleep in the barn. When Ali poked her in the ribs with the butt end of his whip, she woke up and made a small, rather plaintive trumpeting noise. Ali turned away to do some other job, saying over his shoulder to me, "That means she's thirsty. Give her a drink."

I looked, and looked again, and said nervously, "I don't think she needs one, sir." Ali and Ned saw what I saw almost as soon as I'd spoken.

Underneath the hay was a litter of cider casks, either with the bungs removed or with the hoops broken. Hearth-Eye appeared to have drunk about twelve gallons of cider, not counting any turnip wine that might have been put, by mistake of course, in a cider cask and wrongly labelled.

Ali began to recite the Koran; at least, I could not understand what he said.

Hearth-Eye, not pleased at being awakened, shuffled round the barn and leaned on things and gave out little practice trumpetings, and shoved the old cart and the cow-stalls and the walls a little harder each time she passed them. My opinion is that she was as drunk as a lord.

Ali ran out into the yard, his overcoat billowing behind him in the hot, windless afternoon. The elder Coote boy was leaning over the fence, staring into the field. Ali grabbed him and yelled, "Hey, boy, the elephant's drunk all your draught cider. Fetch water, quick!"

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The elder Coote boy's face darkened, and after a while he said, "He had no right to do that. Darned if I'll lift a finger for him," and turned away sullenly.

I do not think anyone had told him that Hearth-Eye was a girl, or he might have acted differently.

We had to get water ourselves, many buckets full of water. Hearth-Eye drank thirstily but was unfortunately not much recovered when it was time to get ready.

The procession was little short of a fiasco.

The people of our village are predominantly conservative and they were quick to notice and deplore the raffish behaviour of Ned's mount. Fighting broke out here and there in the crowd and was subsequently ascribed to Hearth-Eye's obstreperousness. This was pure face-saving as Hearth-Eye was by nature anything but obstreperous.

On the contrary, she allowed herself to be carried away by her innately kind heart to the extent of removing ladies' hats and coats and shawls and giving them to others who seemed less well provided for. True, she pushed Ali into the pond and administered a sound thrashing with her trunk to one of the circus's bareback horses; but the horse would neigh during Hearth-Eye's trumpet voluntaries, while in the case of Ali I am convinced she thought she was doing him a good turn. It was an extremely hot day.

My theory is borne out by the fact that Hearth-Eye followed Ali into the pond, lay down, and spent the afternoon hosing water over herself, over her good friend Ned, and over such village folk as—passing by in various degrees of heat and excitement—seemed to her would welcome a shower.

Towards Ned she exhibited an affection so deep as to border on possessiveness.

Although he tried several times to leave the weeds where Hearth-Eye had carefully lifted him with her trunk, on each occasion she pushed him gently back, hosed him down, and fed him with the buns, peanuts, and biscuits that the more intrepid of our villagers had begun to throw out to her.

A circus performance was eventually given but Ned could not, for the reasons I have explained, ride in the procession round the ring.

Billy Havering and the others not only refused, on this account, to pay their debts but actually compelled us, by *force majeure*, to pay them!

To crown everything we had to give Mr. Coote the £5 for the cider and hay Jane had devoured

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Hearth-Eye's intoxication therefore cost us nearly £900, made up as follows—I copy from the account that Ned and I compiled the following day, which I still have:

Bets, not paid	£868	14s.	6d.
Ned's money. Gone		12s.	6d.
Johnny's money. Gone		7s.	2½d.
Loss	£869	14s.	2½d.
Our share of people seeing Hearth-Eye	£2	5s.	0d.
Tip from Charlie		10s.	0d.
Net loss	£866	19s.	2½d.

★ ★ ★

SEASIDE GOLF

How straight it flew, how long it flew,
It clear'd the rutty track
And soaring, disappeared from view
Beyond the bunker's back—
A glorious, sailing, bounding drive
That made me glad I was alive.

And down the fairway, far along
It glowed a lonely white;
I played an iron sure and strong
And clipp'd it out of sight,
And spite of grassy banks between
I knew I'd find it on the green.

And so I did. It lay content
Two paces from the pin;
A steady putt and then it went
Oh, most securely in.
The very turf rejoiced to see
That quite unprecedented three.

Ah! seaweed smells from sandy caves
And thyme and mist in whiffs,
In-coming tide, Atlantic waves
Slapping the sunny cliffs,
Lark song and sea sounds in the air
And splendour, splendour everywhere.

JOHN BETJEMAN

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FALLEN STAR

BY JOHN COLLIER

IN HELL, as in other places we know of, conditions are damnably disagreeable. Well adjusted, energetic, and ambitious devils take this very much in their stride. They expect to improve their lot and ultimately to become fiends of distinction.

In the great mass of ordinary, plodding, run-of-the-mill devils, any escapist tendencies are sufficiently ventilated by entertainments akin to radio and television, which offer them glimpses of what they take to be paradise, interrupted by screaming commercials.

There are, however, certain idle, worthless, and altogether undevilish devils who dream incessantly of getting away from it all, and a few of them have actually managed to do so. The authorities are at no great pains to recapture them, for they are invariably chronic unemployables and nothing but a burden on the community.

Some of the fugitives have established themselves on sundry minute planetoids which are scattered here and there along the outer fringes of the Pleiades.

These tiny worlds rise like green atolls in the everlasting blue. Here the deserters build their sorry shacks and subsist on a little desultory soul-fishing. They live like beachcombers, growing fatter and lazier every year, and they compare themselves to the mutineers of the *Bounty*.

When they want a bit of change, they take a swim in the azure ether, and sometimes go as far as the cliffs of heaven, just to take a look at the girls, who, naturally enough, are as beautiful as angels.

The cliffs of heaven, you may be sure, are studded with summer resorts and well supervised bathing-beaches. There are also some quiet creeks and unfrequented bays where the ether washes in sapphire waves upon golden rocks, and over sands of a quality to make any honest digger call for spade and bucket.

Here, where no life-guard stands with unfolded pinions, bathing is strictly prohibited.

This is because of the occasional presence of one of those lurking, sharkish, runaway devils, and whoever goes in in defiance

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of the regulations must be prepared to face the consequences. But in spite of the risk, or because of it, some of the younger set of heaven take a huge delight in breaking the rules, as the younger set do everywhere.

Thus a certain delightful young she-angel came down one morning into one of these forbidden caves. The weather was heavenly and her heart was as vibrant as one of her own harp-strings. She felt that her blissful existence might blossom into something even more blissful at any moment.

She sat a long while on an overhanging rock, and sang as gaily as the lark of the morning. Then she stood up, made a pose or two—she hardly knew why—and finally she took off with a swan dive into the exhilarating ether.

An elderly, fat, and most unprepossessing devil had been hanging off-shore in the shallows for no other purpose than to play the peeping Tom. The sight of this lovely creature aroused a ticklish and insistent longing in the old reprobate; it rose up in his black heart like a belch in a tar cauldron.

He swung in and seized her as a shark might seize on a bathing beauty, and he swept her swooning off to his little verdant planet, and onto the rickety porch of his cabin, which jutted out from the rocks, for all the world like one of those fishing-shacks that are to be found on any island in the tropics.

She came to herself with a gasp, and looked with horror at her repulsive captor, whose paunch sagged over his greasy belt, and whose tattered jeans scarcely sufficed to conceal his devilishness. He, with a rusty pair of shears, was already at work clipping her wings and, gathering up the feathers, said, "These will clean my pipe out to perfection. I like to smoke while I fish. Here is my favourite line; it is stronger and longer than it looks. With this I can dabble deep into young men's dormitories. For bait I use some pleasant little dreams I've had at one time and another. I keep 'em in this bucket over here, and you can take one right now and put it on the hook."

"The nasty, wriggly, slimy things!" cried she, shrinking away from the sight. "I wouldn't touch them for anything."

"You'd better," said he, "if ever you want to taste the heart and sweetbreads of a tender young divinity student."

"I'll feed myself," said she, with a curl of her lip. "I eat nothing but honey and flowers, and sometimes the egg of a humming-bird, when I'm extra hungry."

"Very uppish!" said he. "Very snooty! If you think you're here to play the fine lady, you'd better think again. Soft, silly, and good-hearted—that's old Tom Truncheontail if you stroke his fur the right way! But cross me up, and I can be rough,

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I can be tough, and I can be quarrelsome. You'll bait my hooks when I tell you, and you'll scrub and you'll scour and you'll sweep, and you'll cook the dinner and tend the still and make the bed . . . "

" The beds? " said she. " I'll make my own bed. As to yours . . . ! "

" Do one without doing the other," said he, " and you shall ride me back to heaven with a bridle of daisies. I said *bed.* It's singular, that is, and it'd be a lot more singular if it were plural." With that he laughed fit to split his sides.

The angel thought it a very poor joke. " I know I broke the rules," said she. " And I know you can make me work and slave for you. But what I did wasn't a real sin, so you can't make me suffer a fate worse than death."

" Worse than death, eh? " said the devil, his vanity wounded. " That shows how much *you* know about it."

" If I wished to know more," she replied, " I wouldn't choose you for my master."

" Not if I made you a sparkling necklace," said he, " out of the tears of innocent chorus girls? "

" Thank you! " said she. " Keep your trumpery jewellery, and I'll keep my virtue."

" Trumpery! " said he indignantly. " It's clear you don't know what's what in the jewellery line, or in the virtue line, either. All right, my dear, there are more ways than one of taming an absolute little spitfire! "

The old sensualist, however, reckoned without his guest. In the days that followed, he tried this and he tried that, but neither tyranny nor cajolery availed him in the very least against her snowy virtue and his own sooty complexion. When he frowned, she feared him, but when he smiled, she hated him worse than ever devil had been hated before.

" I can," said he, " put you into a whisky bottle, from which you will have to emerge when some wealthy tycoon draws the cork."

" Do so," said she. " He can be no uglier than you, and no more of a nuisance."

" Perhaps not," said he. " Though I imagine you have very little experience of rich playboys. I can feed you to an oyster, from which you'll come out imprisoned in a pearl, and find yourself traded, in the most embarrassing circumstances, for a whole wagonload of the chastity you hold so dear."

" I shall scream ' culture,' " said she, very coolly. " And the victim will reach for her .22, and thus we shall both be saved."

" Very neat " said he " But I can send you to earth as a

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young girl of nineteen or twenty. That's the age when temptations are thickest, and resistance is very low. And the first time you sin, your body, soul, virtue, and all are mine at seven years' purchase. And that," said he, with an oath, "is what I'll do. I was a fool not to have hit on it before."

No sooner said than done. He took her by the ankles, and heaved her far out into the seas of space. He saw her body descending, turning, glimmering, and he dived after it like a schoolboy after a silver coin flung into a swimming-bath.

Some ordinary people, going home very late over Brooklyn Bridge, pointed out to each other what they took to be a falling star, and a little later a drunken poet, returning from an all-night party, was inspired by what he thought was the rosy dawn glimmering through the skimpy shrubbery of Central Park.

This, however, was not the dawn, but our beautiful young she-angel, who had arrived on earth as a young girl who had lost both her clothes and her memory, as sometimes young girls do, and who was wandering about under the trees in a state of perfect innocence.

It is impossible to say how long this would have continued, had she not been found by three kindly old ladies, who always were the first to enter the Park in the morning for the purpose of taking crumbs to their friends the birds.

Had our young angel remained there till lunch-time, anything might have happened, for she retained all her original beauty, and was pinker and more pearly than any dawn. She was round, she was supple; she was more luscious than a peach; there was a something about her that was irresistibly appealing.

The old ladies, with a twittering and fluttering like that of their feathered favourites, charitably surrounded this pink perfection of innocence and desirability. "Poor creature!" said Miss Belfrage, "some man has brought her to this condition."

"Some devil!" said Miss Morrison. This remark afforded infinite amusement to the lubberly fiend, who stood invisibly by. He could not resist giving Miss Morrison a little pinch, of a sort entirely new to her experience. "Dear me! did you do that, Miss Shank?" cried Miss Morrison. "Surely you did not do that?"

"I? I did nothing," said Miss Shank. "What is it?"

"I felt," said Miss Morrison, "a sort of pinch."

"So did I," cried Miss Belfrage. "I felt one that very moment."

"So did I," cried Miss Shank. "Oh dear! perhaps we shall all lose our memories."

"Let us hurry with her to the hospital," said Miss Morrison.

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" The Park seems all wrong this morning, and the birdies won't come near. *They* know! What experiences she must have gone through! "

These kind old ladies took our beautiful but unfortunate she-angel to a hospital for nervous diseases, where she was received charitably and to some extent enthusiastically. She was soon hurried into a little room, the walls of which were of duck's-egg green, this colour having been found very soothing to girls discovered wandering in Central Park with neither their clothes nor their memories.

A certain brilliant young psycho-analyst was put in charge of her case. Such cases were his speciality, and he seldom failed to jog their memories to some purpose.

The fiend had naturally tagged along to the hospital, and now stood there picking his teeth and watching all that transpired. He was delighted to see that the young psycho-analyst was as handsome as could be. His features were manly and regular, and his eyes dark and lustrous, and they became more lustrous still when he beheld his new patient. As for hers, they took on a forget-me-not glimmer that caused the devil to rub his hands again. Everyone was pleased.

The psycho-analyst was an ornament to his much-maligned profession. His principles were of the highest, and yet no higher than his enthusiasm for his science. Now, dismissing the nurses who had brought her in, he took his seat by the couch on which she lay.

" I am here to make you well," said he. " It seems you have had a distressing experience. I want you to tell me what you can remember of it."

" I can't," said she faintly. " I can remember nothing."

" Perhaps you are in a state of shock," said this excellent young analyst. " Give me your hand, my dear, so that I may see if it is abnormally warm, or cold, and if there is a wedding-ring on it."

" What is a hand? " murmured the unfortunate young she-angel. " What is warm? What is cold? What is a wedding-ring? "

" Oh, my poor girl! " said he. " Quite evidently you have had a very severe shock. Those who forget what wedding-rings are often get the worst of all. However, this is your hand."

" And is that yours? " said she.

" Yes, that is mine," he replied.

The young angel said no more, but looked at her hand in his, and then she lowered her delightful eyelashes, and sighed a little. This delighted the heart of the ardent young scientist, for he recognized the beginning of the transference, a condition that indescribably lightens the labours of psycho-analysts.

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"Well, well!" said he, at last. "We must find out what caused you to lose your memory. Here is the medical report. It seems you have not had a blow on the head."

"What is a head?" she asked.

"This is your head," he told her. "And these are your eyes, and this is your mouth."

"And what is this?" said she.

"That," said he, "is your neck."

This adorable young angel was the best of patients. She desired nothing more than to please her analyst for, such is the nature of the transference, he seemed to her like some glorious figure out of her forgotten childhood. Her natural innocence was reinforced by the innocence of amnesia, so she pulled down the sheet that covered her, and asked him, "And what are these?"

"Those?" said he. "How you could have possibly forgotten them. I shall not forget them as long as I live. I have never seen a lovelier pair of shoulders."

Delighted by his approbation, the angel asked one or two more questions, such as at last caused this worthy young analyst to rise from his chair and pace the room in a state of considerable agitation. "Unquestionably," he murmured, "I am experiencing the counter-transference in its purest form, or at least in its most intense one. Such a pronounced example of this phenomenon should surely be the subject of experiment. A little free association seems to be indicated, but with a bold innovation of technique. In my paper I shall call it *The Demonstrative Somatic Method as Applied to Cases of Complete Amnesia.* It will be frowned upon by the orthodox but, after all, Freud himself was frowned upon in his time."

We shall draw a veil over the scene that followed, for the secrets of the psycho-analytic couch are as those of the confessional. There was nothing sacred, however, to Tom Truncheontail, who by this time was laughing his ugly head off. "Because," thought he, "what sin in the world could be greater than to make such an exemplary young psycho-analyst forget himself, his career, and all the ethics of his profession?"

At a certain moment the wily old devil allowed himself to become visible, leaning over the end of the couch with a cynical smile on his weather-beaten face.

"Oh, what is that, darling?" cried the young she-angel, in accents of frustration and dismay.

"What is what?" asked the analyst, who was at this moment somewhat preoccupied by his researches.

The young she-angel became very silent and melancholy. She knew what she had seen, and now remembered things she

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wished she had thought of before. It is well known that this makes sins of this sort no smaller.

" Alas," said she, " I think I have recovered my memory."

" Then you are cured," cried the analyst in delight, " and my method has been proved correct, and will be unanimously adopted in the profession. What an inestimable benefit I have conferred upon my colleagues, or at least on those whose patients are half or a quarter as beautiful as you are! But tell me what you remember. I ask you, not as your doctor, but as your future husband."

How easily one sin follows upon another, particularly the sin of lying, upon that which had just been committed! The poor angel could not find it in her heart to destroy his happiness by telling him that after seven years he would have to relinquish her to the gross and bristly fiend. She murmured something about having fallen asleep in her bath, and having a tendency to somnambulism. Her story was eagerly accepted, and the happy young analyst hastened out to procure a marriage licence.

The fiend immediately made himself visible again, and smiled upon his victim with abominable good nature. " Quick work! " said he. " You've saved me a lot of trouble. There are girls in this town who'd have shilly-shallied for the best part of a week. In return, I'll get you a box or two with some clothes in 'em, so that your story will hold together, and you can marry the guy and be happy. You have to hand it to old Tom T.—he hasn't a jealous hair in his tail! "

The truth is, the old rascal knew she'd sooner or later marry someone or other, and as, actually, he was as jealous as a demon, he thought it better to be jealous of one than of two. Also, he felt she might just as well choose a good provider, with a well-stocked refrigerator and liquor cupboard, and a basement furnace beside which he could sleep warm of nights. Psycho-analysts are always well furnished in these respects.

And what had finally decided him was the reflection that a marriage that is founded on a lie is usually fertile in other transgressions, as pleasant to the nostrils of a fiend as are roses and lilies to the rest of us.

In this last respect, we may say at once that the old villain was bitterly disappointed. No wife could possibly be more angelic than our angel. In fact, the sweet odours of domestic virtue became so oppressive to the devil that he took himself off to Atlantic City for a breath of fresh air. He found the atmosphere of that resort so exhilarating that he remained there most of the seven years.

Thus the angel was almost able to forget the future in the

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extreme happiness of the present. At the end of the first year she became the mother of a sturdy boy, and at the end of the third she had a beautiful little girl. The apartment they lived in was arranged in the best of taste; her husband rose higher and higher in his profession, and was cheered to the echo at all the principal meetings of psycho-analysts.

But as the seventh year drew to a close the fiend came around to see how things were getting along. He told her much of what he had seen in Atlantic City, and embroidered on the life they would live together when her time was up. From that day on he appeared very frequently, and not only when she was alone. He was utterly without delicacy, and would permit himself to be seen by her at moments when even an elephant-hided devil should have realized his presence was embarrassing. She would close her eyes, but fiends are seen more easily with the eyes closed. She would sigh bitterly.

"How can you sigh so bitterly at such a moment as this?" her husband asked her. The angel could hardly explain, and it almost made a rift between them.

"I wonder," said the analyst on another such occasion, "if this can be connected with your experience before you lost your memory. Is it possible your cure is not complete? It almost shakes my faith in my method."

This thought preyed upon his mind until he was on the point of a breakdown. "My work is ruined," said he, one day. "I have lost faith in my great discovery. I am a failure. I shall go downhill. I shall take to drink. Here is a grey hair! What is worse than an old, grey, drunken psycho-analyst, who has lost faith in himself and his science, both of which he believed equal to anything? My poor children, what a father you will have to grow up with! You will have no pleasant home, no education, and probably no shoes. You will get inferiority complexes, and when you are married you will take it out on your unfortunate partners, and they too will have to be psycho-analysed."

At this the poor young angel gave way altogether. After all, there were only a few weeks left. She thought it better to destroy the remnant of her happiness than to ruin the lives of her husband and children. That night she told him all.

"I would never have credited such things," said her husband, "but you, my dear, have made me believe in angels, and from that it is a short step to believing in fiends as well. You have restored my faith in my science, which has frequently been likened to the casting out of devils. Where is he? Can I get a sight of him?"

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"All too easily," replied the angel. "Go upstairs a little earlier than usual, and hide yourself in my wardrobe. When I come up and begin to undress, he'll be quite certain to show himself."

"Very well," said her husband. "Perhaps tonight, as it is rather chilly, you need not . . ."

"Oh, my dear," said she, "it is far too late to bother about trifles of that sort."

"You are right," said he, "for after all, I am a psycho-analyst, and therefore broad-minded, and he is only a devil."

He at once went upstairs and concealed himself, and his angelic wife followed him soon after. Just as she had expected, the devil appeared at a certain moment, lying stretched out on the chaise-longue and leering insolently at the angel. He went so far as to give this innocent creature one of his humorous little pinches as she went by.

"You're getting thin," said he. "However, you'll soon be back in your old form once we start our honeymoon. What fun we shall have together! You've no idea how much I've learnt in Atlantic City!"

He went on like this for some time. In the end the husband stepped out of the wardrobe and took him by the wrist.

"Let go of my wrist!" said the devil, trying to pull himself free, for these old, gross, and sensual devils are like scared and sullen children when a psycho-analyst gets hold of them.

"It is not your wrist that interests me," said the analyst in a tone of lofty detachment. "It's that tail of yours."

"My tail?" muttered old Tom, taken altogether aback. "What about my tail? What's wrong with it?"

"I'm sure it's a very good tail," replied the analyst. "But I imagine you'd like to get rid of it."

"Get rid of my tail?" cried the startled devil. "Why, in the name of all that's unholy, should I want to do that?"

"Everyone to his taste," said the analyst with a contemptuous shrug. "Did you see any little appendages of that description in Atlantic City?"

"Well, no, as a matter of fact I didn't," replied the crestfallen fiend. The truth is, devils, who suggest so very much to the rest of us, are themselves extremely suggestible. That is how they got that way.

"In my opinion that tail is purely psychic in origin," said the analyst. "And I believe it could be cured without much difficulty."

"Who said I want it cured?" retorted the devil angrily.

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"No one said so," replied the man of science in a tranquil tone. "But you have *thought* so, and tried to suppress the thought. By your own admission you are very pronouncedly a *voyeur*—I'll touch on the disadvantages of that later. At least you have seen what is considered normal and pleasing in a well-formed male, and no doubt you would like to be in the mode."

"I have a good time," said the devil, now very much on the defensive.

The analyst allowed a pitying and incredulous smile to overspread his features. He turned to his wife. "My dear," said he, "I must ask you to leave us alone. The confidences of these twisted and unhappy creatures are sacred."

The angel at once withdrew, closing the door very quietly behind her. The analyst took a seat near the head of the chaise-longue on which the unfortunate devil was lying. "So you think you have a good time?" said he in the gentlest tone imaginable.

"I do," responded the fiend defiantly. "And what's more, very soon I expect to have a better one."

"It is a mere hypothesis, of course," said the analyst. "It can be nothing more at this early stage of analysis. But I suggest that what you claim as a good time is just a mask for a very profound maladjustment. The physical symptoms are noticeable. You are appallingly overweight, and I suspect that this in turn has produced a heart condition."

"It's true I breathe a little hard now and then," said the devil uneasily.

"Do you mind telling me how old you are?" said the analyst.

"Three thousand four hundred and forty," replied the devil.

"I should have thought you at least a thousand years older than that," said the analyst. "However, I don't claim to be infallible. But one thing is quite certain: you were very much a misfit in your original surroundings, otherwise you would not have run away. And now you are trying to run away from analysis. It is a threat to that tail of yours. Consciously, you know it's a terrible disfigurement, but you are unwilling to give it up."

"Oh, I don't know about that," said the fiend uncertainly.

"Oh yes, you cling to it as a mark of your devilishness," said the analyst sternly. "And what does this devilishness amount to? I think we shall find it is a protest, arising out of a sense of rejection, which may well date from the actual moment of your becoming a devil. Even human birth is a traumatic experience. How much worse must it be, to be born a poor rejected devil!"

The wretched fiend shifted his shoulders, pulled at his dewlaps, and showed other signs of distress. Thereupon the analyst drove home the attack, referring to fits of depression, vague fears,

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a sense of guilt, an inferiority complex, spells of insomnia, a compulsion to eat and drink too much, and psychosomatic aches and pains.

In the end the poor devil positively begged to be analysed; all he asked was that he might be given extra sessions so that the cure could be accomplished more quickly.

The analyst was willing to oblige. He sent his wife and children away for a long summer holiday, and worked day and night upon his difficult patient. Before the angel returned, this transformed devil had left the house clad in a pearly grey suit, tailless, comparatively slim, and mentally alert. He shortly afterwards became engaged to a Mrs. Schlager, a widow who had also been a troublesome patient in her time.

He visited his benefactor's home, bounced the children on his knee, and apologized to his hostess for all the inconvenience he had caused her. She forgave him for, after all, his misbehaviour had been the effect of unconscious impulses, and had resulted in her marriage, so that she felt he was a friend of the family.

He was a little wearisome in recounting the history of his case, but this is very usual in those who have benefited from analysis. In the end, he went on to Wall Street, where he did so extremely well that he was soon able to endow a superb clinic for the young psycho-analyst.

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DENTINENTAL COLICACIES

It was half-past midnight, late even for Spain, before I dined, my companion being an American scriptwriter who revealed that he shared my own bewitched admiration for the English menus so thoughtfully provided by many Spanish restaurants.

He cited a wine-list in Barcelona which offered " Xeres from Sherry of the Frontier." I replied with a *trouvaille* from San Sebastian. It had begun, quietly enough, with " Several Kinds of Shells " and " Calamary in his Own Ink "—*calamares en su tinta.* Then, suddenly, the mystery sprang upon one: " Anahogs in a Seamanlike Manner."

I never discovered what these were, and did not dare to ask, lest they should be brought (or led) snarling and clanking and hornpiping to the table. I carry at the back of my mind an image of an anahog, feral and shipshape, which comes saluting into my dreams . . . At all events the San Sebastian translator kept up a high standard throughout, ending with a notable flourish on:

Fruits of the Season
Tart of the House.

KENNETH TYNAN, *Bull Fever*

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CALL TO ARMS

She's gane, like Alexander,
To spread her conquests farther

ROBERT BURNS

Lovers may be, and, indeed, generally *are* enemies, but they never can be friends; because there must always be a spice of jealousy and a something of self in all their speculations.

Indeed, I rather look upon love altogether as a sort of hostile transaction, very necessary to make or to break matches, and keep the world going, but by no means a sinecure to the parties concerned.

LORD BYRON, *Letter, 10th November* 1822

Pincer Movement

When from her Beauty long I've strove
To free my doating Heart,
Her wit brings back my fliting Love,
And chains it down by Art.

Then, when her wit I've often foil'd,
With one commanding view,
I'm by her Eyes again beguil'd,
And Captive took anew.

Her Wit alone were vain, alone
Her Beauty would not do;
But what the Devil can be done
With Wit and Beauty too?

ROBERT GOULD, *Song*

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Suits of Amour

Love has not changed much since caveman days; it's just that diamonds have replaced clubs.

Conditional Surrender

If 'tis to try me, use me as you please,
But, when that Tryal's over, give me ease;
Don't torture one that wishes you no harm,
Prepare to cure me, or forbear to Charm.

LORD JOHN CUTTS, 1661–1707,
To a lady, who desired me not to be in love with her

Scorched 'Earth Policy

The first Lord Wavell, when told that a book was to be published called *The Strategy of the Indirect Approach*, said that he had not realized there was any other kind of strategy. It is certainly true that in the unending war between the sexes almost all the strategy employed by both sides is indirect . . .

Strategy, however, does not succeed merely by being devious and may indeed fail by being too much so. This happened the other day in Austria when a young man used the method of indirect approach by climbing down his girl friend's chimney. The young lady had lit a fire—a circumstance, one would have thought, which only an exceptionally unobservant young man would have failed to notice before commencing the descent—and he finished up in hospital.

All may, of course, end well.

In the privacy of her apartment, fragrant still with the aroma of scorched trousers, the lady may find pity gradually overcoming her feelings of alarm and indignation, and pity may in its turn yield place to some yet more tender emotion.

One cannot, all the same, help feeling that her admirer would have done much better to use the door.

One suspects that both sides devote a great deal of energy and ingenuity to elaborate feints and ambitious pincer movements which might be more profitably employed on a bold, straightforward *coup de main*.

Sheikhs and Chimneys

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Happy Prisoner

. . . I see the good, the wise, the stoute, the bolde;
The strongest champion and the learnedst man,
Have bene and be, by lust of love controld.
Which when I thinke, I hold me well content,
To live in love, and never to repent.

GEORGE GASCOIGNE, *A Hundreth sundrie Flowres*, 1573

Tactical Error

" This last day or two," argued the girl, " there wasn't a thing wrong with us but the weather. Heat, you can't overlook: they say it was never like this till now—though *I* was never in any other house. Anything's natural enough, I dare say, here.—Or should be," she added with some misgiving, a fidget from one to the other foot. " Only, for goodness sake what's come up? I'm sure I'd never care to stay where there'd been a curse."

" That was Miss Maud's fun."

" She's a tormentor," agreed Kathie.

Stupendously, all at once she began to giggle. She saw daylight, and it was too much for her, it convulsed her—so much so that, ripping her arms apart, she had to beat them upon the air. Bent in two, she vomited laughter; though also, mortified by the exhibition, she let out penitent sobs and moans. This brought Antonia back on her tracks, to ask: " What on earth's as funny as all that? "

" N—nothing, miss," admitted Kathie. She hiccupped.

" Then don't hiccup."

" Only, tormenting and teasing is half the fun—"

Antonia shifted her black spectacles. Her saying nothing emboldened Kathie to finish: "—when it's a lovely man."

" That's a wicked thought."

Kathie nursed it, liking it all the better.

ELIZABETH BOWEN, *A World of Love*

Capitulation

Gently, kind love restrain, restrain thy hand,
Keep back thy cruel pricking dart!
Lest it not wound but kill my heart;
I yeild. Who dare resist if thou command?

JOHN DANCER, *Aminta*

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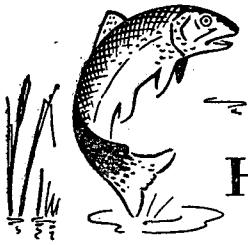
BLUE CHARM



BY PAUL HYDE BONNER

WHEN Tim saw Brigadier Charteris coming up the path through the rhododendrons, he stepped quickly back from the bank and entered the small pine wood. Stealthily, like a thief or a deserter, which the good Lord knew he was not, for it was his beat and no man on earth had a better right to be walking its banks, he crept up through the trees and shrubs, keeping himself well hidden from the river, until he reached a big stone on a rise of ground where he could sit and not be seen, yet have through the leaves of a hazel bush a commanding view of the pool. He laid his gaff down on the turf beside him and watched.

The path from the inn, up which the Brigadier was coming for his day's sport on the Otter Beat, was on the opposite bank from where Timothy Murtha was keeping his hidden vigil. From the main road to the upper pool, it followed the stream in a bower of azalea and rhododendron, then suddenly it emerged in the sunlight where the woods and the shrubs receded, displaying the pool in a nice margin of grassy bank, like a cat's-eye set in emeralds. The streak in the cat's-eye was the long wedge of white water that bisected the dark, still surface of the long pool.

It was on the edge of the streak that the salmon lay, gaining strength for the next night's battle with the rapids ahead. To be sure, there were also fish, and good ones, way down at the apex of the wedge where the swift water subsided into the black stillness of the pool. But these would have to be reached from Tim Murtha's side and Tim knew that it was the old soldier's habit to save them for the late afternoon.

Charteris stopped when he reached the sunlight to survey his day's field of operations. He was carrying two rods in his right hand, a twelve-foot fly rod and a much shorter spinning rod. From his shoulder hung a poacher's sack of canvas and braided

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string, to which was attached a brightly polished metal gaff.

He wore a worn and mended tweed jacket of a greenish brown colour and an ancient stalker's hat of the same stuff, which was hung like a Christmas tree with old and dilapidated salmon and sea-trout flies. His black rubber hip-boots seemed unnaturally long and narrow, making him look like an ungainly crane, for he was a tall, spare man with a thin, weatherbeaten face and a cavalryman's temper.

The only thing new on him in ten years is the gaff, Tim thought, and spat silently into the hazel bush.

Charteris watched the water for a sign, his eyes concentrated intently on the sides of the wedge of white water. There was a splash as a fish showed in the centre of the pool, just beyond the apex of the current. The Brigadier turned his head quickly, but not quickly enough to see it. Tim had, though. He had seen a monster of a spring fish with a belly already turning red. Charteris hesitated, then walked on to the head of the pool.

He was about to lay his rods carefully down beside the little stone luncheon hut which stood near the rocks at the head of the pool when the monster leapt again, this time coming down on the water on his side with a smack that sounded like a cannon shot. Charteris, who had his back to the tail of the pool, did not turn in time to see the fish. He was suddenly undecided. He could not make up his mind whether the provocation was worth changing tactics that had remained rigid for ten seasons. Should he succumb to the temptation to fish the slow water before he had thoroughly covered the sides of the swift wedge?

A stubborn donkey of a man he is, Tim said to himself as he saw the hesitation in the Brigadier's posture. If it was me now standing beside him as it used to be, and if I was to say to him, "General, if I was you, I'd have a go at that one. He's a bender, he is. A bit red maybe, but a powerful big salmon." What would he do? He'd wither me with them beady eyes of his, and "Tim," he'd say, "you should know better than to tell a man to be wasting his time on a spring fish that has been in the river since March and would be paying no more attention to a fly or a prawn than you would to a glass of milk. We'll be fishing the fast water as always," he'd say, stubborn as a Belfast solicitor.

Charteris made up his mind. As long as he was alone, with no gillie to witness the breakdown of his habit, he would go after that salmon. Not that he approved of this changing of his calculated, proven tactics. He was, as a matter of fact, chagrined at his lack of staunchness, at his weakness in falling for the blandishments of a playful little summer salmon who could be as easily snared in the afternoon.

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He picked up his fly rod, reached for his fly box in the poacher's sack, and carefully selected a low-water Blue Charm, his favourite fly for July on the Derryclare. As he snipped off the tired Silver Doctor, which he had used the previous evening for sea-trout on the Ballymaam Beat, and bent the new fly on his leader, he noted that the clouds were forming around the Twelve Pins, which towered to the north of him, those peaks of the highlands that guard the haunted streams and loughs of Connemara. A good omen, he thought. A bit of shade over the water will help to hide the trailing gut.

Before starting on his trek to the far bank he checked his gear precisely: flies, leaders, grease, scissors, knife, scales, all safely stowed in the sack, gaff hanging ready, line greased at the hotel before he started—everything, in fact, primed for the battle. Leaving the spinning rod by the hut, he walked slowly up the path to the stone bridge, which crossed the river at the rapids. He did not approve of impatience.

Tim, watching from his aerie, could scarcely believe his eyes. The Brigadier was actually going to change his iron routine and start fishing the slack water. It was unprecedented, a display of folly, yet Tim knew why the sound of that fish smacking the water had caused it. There was a reason, a memory.

At the Derryclare Hotel for fishermen, each beat was assigned its own gillie, and each rod was made to rotate daily, beginning at the butt on Balinafad Lough and proceeding downstream until, on the ninth day, he was fishing the Roundstone Beat at the mouth of the river. The Otter Beat had been Tim Murtha's for fifteen years, and during that time, from March to September, from big spring salmon to fat autumn sea-trout, he had gaffed and netted all sorts of fish for all manner of fishermen.

He knew his stretch of water as well as any fish that ever rested in it, every rock, every eddy of the current, and every spot preferred by salmon and by sea-trout. A lifetime of observation had taught him the size and colour of lure that fish fancied under each condition of sky, wind, temperature, and height of water, for he had been a mighty poacher of these waters before the hotel had bought the property from the estate of a noble lord and had judiciously put him on the pay-roll as a gillie.

If you met his standards of character and skill, he would, when asked, impart his knowledge and suggest the fly to be used. But if you were a braggart or a dunce or a novice without humility, he would let you flounder in your own way.

Only a miserable few of the guests who came to the hotel were fishermen of the skill which Tim respected. The majority, the

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great majority, were heavy-handed duffers who had no inkling of how a fish liked to have a fly presented. Brigadier Charteris was unquestionably the best of the few real fishermen. Being highly skilled and with a delicate and intuitive wrist, he invariably killed fish when others failed, and had retained his position as top rod on the river for ten seasons.

Like all champions, he was as proud of his record as he was contemptuous of tiros. His annual visit to the Derryclare was always of three weeks' duration—the last week in June and the the first fortnight of July—which meant that, as a rule, his rotation brought him three times each season to the care of Tim Murtha on the Otter Beat.

For nine years Tim and the Brigadier had welded their forces in a perfect harmony of respect and admiration, in spite of the latter's irascible, dour, and dogmatic ways. Charteris had stated flatly, over his whisky in the billiard room, that Tim was the best damn gillie on the river. While Tim, who avoided direct statements as he would the ghost of the Clancy, inferred to his fellow gillies that the Brigadier was almost as pretty a fisherman as he was himself, which was the highest praise he had ever given any man with a rod in his hand.

Thus it had been on a bright July afternoon of the year before when the Brigadier, with Tim watching carefully from beyond a jut of rock on the downstream side where he would not interfere with the backcast, had started to fish the tail of the current on the Otter pool with a low-water Blue Charm. On the third cast Tim had seen the greased line swing around towards the bank, then suddenly sink as something drew it taut.

The Brigadier had seen it too, and being a calm and practised fisherman had let whatever it was that had taken the fly swim down to the stream-bed with it. After a suitable interval the Brigadier had whipped his rod-tip smartly. Then all hell had broken loose. The centre of the still, dark water had erupted like Vesuvius as a great salmon, a monster of a spring fish, had leapt a good four feet into the air, shining and glistening in the sunlight, his great rose-coloured belly curving as he headed back into the river, intent on freeing himself. But as suddenly as he had leapt the Brigadier had lowered his rod, for he was one of those sensitive fishermen who could feel a fish gather for a leap.

The fight had been one of heroic scale. On his first dash upstream the salmon had made two mighty leaps in the fast water, then had turned and run furiously downstream, taking out line until the black silk backing started running through the guides. At this the Brigadier had raced down the bank, scampering over the rocky promontory like a mountain goat, leaping down in

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front of Tim, and floundering on through the reeds when he had been forced into the water by the azaleas that lined the banks below the pool. Out into the stream he had splashed until the water was inches from the top of his boots, and still the reel had sung as the fish continued downstream.

Not once during all his dashing and scrambling had the Brigadier allowed his rod to waver from the perpendicular, that is, the butt of the rod, for the rod as a whole was bent into a letter C.

"By God, Tim, I don't believe he's going to stop!" he had shouted when he reached the limit of his depth.

"Try givin' him slack," Tim had called.

"I might lose him."

"Either way you might, sir," Tim had yelled to make himself heard above the roar of the rapids.

Without answering, the Brigadier had quickly dropped the top of his rod and the line went slack at once. Feeling no pull, the salmon had stopped. Then, from the action of the line, he could tell the fish had turned and was swimming slowly upstream to his accustomed lair. He reeled in carefully, trying to match the progress of the fish without putting any weight on the hook.

When the salmon had reached the tail of the pool, Charteris had retreated step by step, back to the bank, over the rocks, until he was standing on the spot where he had hooked him. Then gradually he had tightened the line until he could feel the fish solidly entrenched on the bottom. He had given the rod a few gentle jerks, but the salmon had not budged. Then he had ordered Tim to drop a few rocks on the spot where the line indicated that the salmon was sulking.

Tim had picked up a stone the size of a brick and lobbed it into the pool. It must have annoyed the fish for he had moved upstream, not in a rush but deliberately, until he was under the white water. Then the Brigadier, exerting rod pressure with great skill and delicacy, had turned him, making him swim downstream and towards the near bank.

He had seemed docile, beaten. His great body had come up to the surface, swimming with only a languid motion of his tail. He had passed the Brigadier and was headed for the point of the rocky peninsula. Tim had not moved, seeing that the fish was far from spent.

"Get out there and gaff him as he passes the rocks," the Brigadier had shouted.

"'Tis not ready he is for the gaff," Tim had cautioned.

"Hurry, you idiot! Gaff him now," the Brigadier had cried angrily, leaning on the rod in order to hold the fish in near to the point of the rocks.

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It was a command. Reluctantly, feeling it to be a crucial error in judgment, Tim had climbed out on the rocks and, crouching, had lowered the gaff into the water behind the salmon's tail. Slowly he had moved the gaff forward while the fish, his jaw clamped on the taut gut, fanned the water and watched him.

When the iron was under the salmon's midriff, Tim had come up quickly, but the fish had seen the motion of his hand and turned like lightning, leaping at the end of the turn. The point of the gaff had merely torn a cut in its side, and the Brigadier, not expecting the leap for which there had been no warning, had failed to lower his rod so that the gut had parted at the fish's mouth.

Tim had turned where he was crouching on the rocks and shouted, " A pity, sir. He'd go fifty pounds, that fish. Just as I told you, he wasn't ready for the gaff."

The Brigadier's face had been crimson with rage. The rod was shaking in his hand as if he had in mind beating Tim over the head with it.

" You clumsy brute! " he had roared. " You missed him. Any child could have gaffed him. I brought him to you on a platter and you jolly well made a hash of it. Next time I fish this beat, I'll do my own gaffing."

Still shaking with fury, he had reeled in his line. Before stalking back to the bridge he had said, " You ought to be sacked for this, Tim Murtha. You've lost me the best fish ever seen in this river."

Oh, there had been a great to-do about it at the hotel, which had lasted until Brigadier Charteris had left for Dublin and the Holyhead ferry. Charteris had stormed at the management and the guests, saying that Tim was a butcher who had no right to be a gillie at all, let alone gillie at the Otter Beat.

Of course, the management and the gillies and the waiters and the chambermaids had accepted Tim's side of the story. They knew how many salmon Tim had gaffed legitimately and illegitimately, and did not question his statement that the Brigadier had not taken his advice, the advice of the greatest expert in County Galway.

All this Tim remembered as he watched the tall, lean figure of Brigadier Charteris cross the bridge and stalk down the path that led to the spot on the grassy bank where the disaster had occurred. Although the manager had told him that he would not be needed when the Brigadier fished the Otter Beat this season, nevertheless Tim had decided that it would be more fun watching the old man fish than drinking stout at the Roundstone pub.

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When the Brigadier came to that point on the path nearest to the hazel bush, Tim looked carefully to see what fly he had chosen. Even at ten yards he could make out that it was a Blue Charm, and he knew from the height of the water and the shine of the sun on the dark surface of the pool that it was the one lure which might tempt a salmon on this morning.

Not that he thought for a moment that the old fish who had showed would be interested. Spring fish don't take in July. That old bruiser of a year ago had been a freak exception, something which does not happen twice, certainly not in the same spot.

Still, Tim thought, I'll be calling on all the saints in heaven to give that fish a mind to nibble at a wee bit of a Blue Charm with no dressing on him at all. From what I've seen of him he's as big as the other one, he is, if not a pound or two bigger.

Having reached his position, Charteris took the poacher's sack from his shoulder, unhooked the gaff and hung it on his belt, then deliberately placed the sack well back near the bushes, where, if anything should occur, he would not tread on it. The pool was placid now, giving no hint that any salmon were watching from its dark depths.

Charteris took his stance and stripped some line from his reel, shaking the fly in the sunlight. His first cast was short and tentative, covering only the water near the bank. It was meant to drown the fly, not to excite any appetite. He stripped more line and made a second cast straight out into the stream, then watched his greased line float around in an arc as the current carried the fly down towards the jutting point of rock below him. Two more short strips of line and he cast again. This time the line was well out to the apex of the swift water.

Again he watched—and Tim also—as the floating line curved gracefully, his eye focused on the knot at the end where the leader was tied. He noticed that the knot was cutting the water at a speed which the current did not justify. Then it disappeared below the surface and the line became taut with a steady downward pull. It was a sign that Charteris recognized from long experience. He observed it calmly, that is, outwardly calmly, with the inner excitement controlled by reason. A fish had the fly in its mouth and was sinking to the stream-bed.

Momentarily, at least, he had forgotten his experience of the year before. It never occurred to him that the taker was anything but a small summer salmon, or maybe a grilse. But not so Tim. He was holding his breath in anticipation, praying wildly for a repetition, knowing that where the fly was taken was where the monster had twice shown.

When he thought the fish had had sufficient time to get the

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fly well in his mouth, Charteris came up firmly with the rod-tip in order to set the hook. The waters of the pool were raked as if by a torpedo.

A great boiling wake streaked to the opposite shore where the salmon broke the surface in a tremendous leap, straight up, nose to the sky, then giving his body a twist as every muscle was directed to shaking the fly from his lip. But the line had slackened even before the fish had reached the summit of his leap, for the Brigadier, on the instant of the first rush, had anticipated the jump and was prepared to meet it.

What he had not bargained for was the size and strength of this great salmon. Like last year's, he thought, as big, if not bigger. He could feel his nerves tuning every muscle of his body into a responsive spring of steel.

This time he would do it alone, even if it took all day. He'd show them it could be done. No man is given two chances like this in a lifetime. It was a test, a measure of his skill.

After the third leap the salmon rushed downstream and the reel screeched as his line flashed through the guides. The black backing came into sight as the fish dashed past the reed bed and Charteris was prepared to repeat his scramble of the year before. However, he had already made up his mind to try slack-line tactics before the salmon forced him to wade into the stream. It had worked once. It might work again. At all events, if the hook was firm, nothing would be lost.

It did work. The salmon checked his rush and turned, swimming slowly back to the centre of the pool.

I taught him that one, Tim said to himself. He had risen from his rock, peering over the bush, knowing that as long as that salmon was on the line there was no chance of the Brigadier taking his eyes from the river. Tim was shaking all over with excitement, whispering to himself in gasps, " Holy Mother of God! The saints be praised! 'Tis the biggest bloody fish that ever a man has seen! The father of all salmon it is! "

As the fish neared the tail of the current, the Brigadier put the pressure on again, not wanting him to sink and sulk as the other one had. This brought on another rush, with another leap at the end of it, this time straight up into the rapids where the rocks were thick and jagged.

The next rush was a return towards the bank at Charteris's feet. He reeled in furiously, but the fish was faster, swirling to the surface, seeing his antagonist, and dashing off again, far over to the opposite shore.

If he keeps this up, Tim thought, he'll soon tire himself. A pink fish has no strength for a long battle. And if that lanky

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fighting-cock of an Englishman has an ounce of brain in his head, which I doubt, he'll bide his time until he can coax him into the shallow reeds below the point of rock. But if he tries it before the salmon is on his side, showing the pink belly of him, he'll lose him as sure as he lost the last one.

Tim, of course, was prejudiced. A year ago he would have counted on the Brigadier to plan the kill correctly in view of the circumstances. But ever since that wrong command he was convinced that the soldier's head was as hard as his heart. He could not know now, watching the battle, that Charteris had already made the identical decision.

The salmon was tugging in short, pugnacious lunges, trying to work his way towards some sunken piles which had once supported a pier on the opposite bank. Equally determined that he should not reach them, the Brigadier backed up the bank, giving every ounce that the gut would stand in an effort to pull the fish's head back towards the current. The pressure succeeded, for the salmon dashed upstream again, leaping out of the foam and whirling about in a frenzy.

On the next leap, which was directly below him, Tim saw something that made his heart skip a beat. As clear as could be, he had seen the hook holding a small strip of torn skin on the salmon's lower jaw. " Save my soul," he said to himself, " if he takes another leap, he's gone! "

He saw the Brigadier reeling hard, his rod held high, the tip bending to the weight of the salmon, and he wanted to cry out, " Ease him, sir. He's about to pull loose! " but he dared not. If he did call, and the fish broke, he would be blamed again.

Charteris had not seen the precarious hold of the hook. From where he was standing, one would have had to have the eye of an eagle to note so small a thing in an instant. Besides, he was far too concentrated on the rod and the line and the general behaviour of his adversary. He had observed, however, that after that last leap the salmon had seemed suddenly tired. He swam lazily now, rolling from side to side, closer to the surface than he had been.

Charteris let him swim, holding him with only enough tension to feel himself in control. The fish passed the end of the current, his tail out of the water, fanning slowly. A slight pressure of the rod made him head towards the bank.

Tim figured correctly that if this situation maintained for another few minutes, the salmon would swing past the rocks and close to shore. He could see that the salmon was close to exhaustion and that the Brigadier was letting him have his way. It was then that Tim made up his mind.

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Grabbing his gaff, he ran through the woods to a place below the rocky point, then, falling on his stomach, he wriggled through the bushes and slid down the bank behind the rocks so that the Brigadier could not see him. When he reached the water, he slipped in like an otter and pulled himself along on the edge of the rocks. At the tip of the point he waited behind the biggest rock, watching for the salmon to come into view, with only his head and shoulders showing above the water.

Charteris was wondering if the fish was through, ready for the beach. He was in no hurry. After that first rush he had made up his mind to wait until he could see the salmon's belly before making any move to bring him to the reeds. He did not care if it took all day.

This fish was worth lunch, tea, and dinner. But the beast was plainly tired, rolling as he was from side to side, letting the current ease him along. He watched the great tail, fanning its slow, pitiful way off the tip of the point. He would let it go on a bit. No trouble there. The tail disappeared behind the rock.

There was the noise of a tremendous commotion in the water beyond the point. Charteris jerked pressure on the line. As he did so the weight evaporated and his fly went sailing through the air. "Damn! Blast! Bloody!" he roared. "He's off!"

Through the smoke and din of his own anguish he became faintly conscious of the fact that the commotion beyond the point had not ceased. Dropping his rod, he jumped forward onto the rocks and looked down. There below him was Tim Murtha, half submerged, his arms and chest pinning the huge salmon to the bank, one hand gripping the handle of the gaff so hard that his knuckles were white.

It took the two of them to carry the fish to the hotel and place it on the scales in the billiard room. Before Tim could lift a weight, the entire staff, including the cook and two kitchen-maids, were standing about, shaking their heads, and saying, "Glory be!"

Charteris just stood there, looking strangely wan and contrite. He said nothing. In fact he had said very little since he had found Tim hugging the fish in the river, only a weak, "Miracle!" when he had seen the torn thread of skin which had held the hook.

His eyes were on the salmon, which was so large that he could hardly be kept steady in the pan. He seemed frozen, like a man in shock. He did not see Tim putting every counter-weight in the house on the scales with trembling fingers, the stone floor beneath him holding a pool of water from his dripping clothes.

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Not all the counter-weights would budge the bar, so Tim had to ask the manager for a loan of some sovereigns. There was a breathless silence when the bar finally lifted a fraction of an inch. "Fifty-seven pounds, nine ounces!" Tim intoned.

"And the record for the river," the manager added, extending his hand to the Brigadier.

Charteris, still in a daze, shook the hand perfunctorily. "Barman," he said in a low voice, "bring me a bottle of your best Dublin whisky."

No one spoke while the barman went for the whisky, though the manager was tempted to ask how it happened that Tim had been on the Otter Beat, but a look at the Brigadier's white face made him think that perhaps it was not the right moment. The barman returned with a bottle and handed it to the Brigadier. They all watched him take it and put it under his arm while he reached for his wallet and extracted a five-pound note.

Putting the bottle and the note together in his right hand, Charteris cleared his throat and spoke. "That fish," he said, "was held by a thread of skin on his lip. If it had not been for the magnificent gaff work of Tim Murtha, he would never have graced those scales."

He handed the bottle and the note to the dripping Tim. "I salute the best gillie on this or any other river."

With his back as straight as a ramrod the Brigadier executed an about-turn and marched out of the room. The colour had returned to his face and the trace of a smile wrinkled his eyes as he heard the applause behind him.

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NO PARKING!

Eric Ambler, the supreme writer of spy stories, suggests that an international spy reserve should be created and called "The E. Phillips Oppenheim Park." He recommends the Ile du Lévant off the Côte d'Azur as the ideal location since it abounds in Vauban and Napoleonic fortresses for visiting spies to spy on.

Disabled ex-Servicemen would provide a team of dupes for the amateur and escapes by boat to the mainland could be run at scheduled intervals and at dead of night. Female spies in the traditional black satin, and a small atomic pile would be further attractions.

If Mr. Ambler only knew it, these trimmings would not be necessary on the Ile du Lévant. Half of it is a secret testing ground for French V-weapons, and the other half is a nudist colony.

ATTICUS, *in The Sunday Times*

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IMMORTAL STORY

BY ISAK DINESEN

IN the sixties of the last century there lived in Canton an immensely rich tea-trader whose name was Clay. He was a tall, dry, and close old man. He had a magnificent house and a splendid equipage, and he sat in the midst of both, erect, silent, and alone.

Amongst the other Europeans of Canton, Mr. Clay had the name of an iron-hard man and a miser. His looks, voice, and manner, more than anything actually known against him, had made him this reputation. All the same, two or three stories about him, many times repeated, seemed to bear out the general opinion of the man.

Fifteen years ago, for instance, a French merchant, Dupont, who at one time had been Mr. Clay's partner, was ruined by unlucky speculations. As a last chance he tried to get a consignment of tea on board the clipper *Thermopylae*, which lay in the harbour ready to get under way. But he owed Mr. Clay the sum of three hundred guineas, and his creditor laid hands on the tea, got his own shipment of tea off with the *Thermopylae*, and by this move ruined his rival. The Frenchman lost everything, and he was thrown upon the streets with his family. When he saw no way out of his misfortune, he committed suicide.

Mr. Clay took over the dead man's house, a big beautiful villa with a large garden in which peacocks strutted on the lawns.

Dupont, it was told, on the last day of his life had called together his pretty, gentle wife and his bright young children. Since all their misery, he declared, had risen from the moment when he first set eyes on the face of Mr. Clay, he now bound them by a solemn vow never to look into that face again. It was also told that when he had been about to leave his house, of which he was very proud, he had burnt or smashed up every object of art in it. But the tall gilt-framed looking-glasses brought out from France, which till now had reflected only gay and affectionate scenes, he left, with the words that it should be his murderer's punishment to meet, wherever he went, a portrait of the hangman.

Mr. Clay settled in the house, and sat down to dine in solitude,

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Baroness Blixen has lived with adventure. Indeed, it runs in the family. Her father, a naval officer, decided to make his home with the Minnesota Indians; her brother served with the Royal Canadian Highlanders and migrated to Canada.

So it is not surprising to find the young Danish Baroness in Africa, living on a coffee plantation and passing the rainy season by way of writing stories. Which is when "Isak Dinesen" first came to life as her pen personality

The natives, enchanted by her zeal for writing, firmly believed she was producing a new Koran. A sudden drop in coffee prices brought her back to her family home in Denmark, where she now lives not far from Hamlet's Elsinore, sailing a small boat when well enough to do so, and dreaming of an African return.

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face to face with his portrait. It is doubtful whether he was ever aware of the lack of friendliness in his surroundings, for the idea of friendliness had never entered into his scheme of life.

By the time he was seventy years old he fell ill with the gout, and for a long time was almost paralysed. The pain was so severe that he could not sleep, and his nights seemed infinitely long.

Late one night it happened that one of Mr. Clay's young clerks, named Elishama Levinski, came to his house with a pile of accounts that he had been revising. The old man made him go through the account books with him. When the morning came he found that this night had passed less slowly than the others.

From this time it became an established rule that the young man should make his appearance in the huge, richly furnished bedroom by nine o'clock, to sit by his old employer's bedside and read aloud by the light of a candle. Thus it came about that a few nights later, when Elishama had finished reading the accounts to Mr. Clay, and the old man growled and prepared to send him off, the clerk took from his pocket a small book and said, "Here, Mr. Clay, is something that I shall read to you."

Mr. Clay turned his pale eyes to the reader's face. Elishama read: *The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it.*

"What is that?" Mr. Clay asked.

Elishama held up his hand to impose silence, and then read on:

Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the

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dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.

When Elishama had got so far, he laid down his paper and looked straight in front of him. Mr. Clay drew in his breath asthmatically. "What was all that?" he asked again.

Elishama looked at Mr. Clay and said, "The prophet-Isaiah."

"Then all these things should come to pass!" Mr. Clay remarked disdainfully. There was a long pause.

"Is anybody doing anything to make these things happen?"

"No," said Elishama.

Mr. Clay's knees were at this moment hurting badly, and he was painfully aware of his lameness and infirmity.

"It is a foolish thing," he declared, "to foretell things. People should record things that have already happened. I know what such a record is called: a story. I once heard a story myself.

"When I was twenty years old," he went on after another long silence, "I sailed from England to China. And I heard this story from a sailor the night before we touched the Cape of Good Hope.

"The sailor had once come ashore in a big town. I do not remember which, but it does not matter. He was walking by himself in a street near the harbour, when a fine carriage drove up to him, and an old gentleman descended from it. This gentleman said, 'You are a fine-looking sailor. Do you want to earn five guineas tonight?'

"The sailor," Mr. Clay went on, "naturally answered yes. The rich gentleman then told him to come with him, and drove him in his carriage to a big and splendid house just outside the town. Within the house everything was equally grand and sumptuous. The gentleman gave him a fine meal and expensive wine. When they had finished this meal, the master of the house said to the sailor, 'I am, as you see, a very rich man, the richest man in this town. But I am old. I have not got many years left, and I dislike and distrust the people who will inherit what I have collected and saved up in life. Three years ago I married a young wife. But she has been no good to me, for I have no child.'"

Here Mr. Clay made a pause to collect his thoughts.

"With your permission," said Elishama, "I, too, can tell that story."

"What is that?" exclaimed Mr. Clay, very angry at the interruption.

"I shall tell you the rest of that story, with your permission, if you will listen, Mr. Clay," said Elishama, and went on.

"The old gentleman led the sailor to a bedroom that was lighted by candlesticks of pure gold, five on the right side and five on the left. Was it not so, Mr. Clay? In the room there was a bed, and a partition was made by chains of gold before the bed, and in the bed lay a lady. The old man said to this lady, 'You know my wish. Now do your best to have it carried out.' Then from his purse he took a piece of gold—a five-guinea piece, Mr. Clay—and handed it to the sailor, and after that he left the room.

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"The sailor stayed with the lady all night. But when the day began to spring, the door of the house was opened to him by the old man's servant, and he left the house and went back to his ship. Was it not so, Mr. Clay?"

Mr. Clay for a minute stared at Elishama, then asked, "How do you come to know this story? Have you, too, met the sailor from my ship near the Cape of Good Hope?"

"That story, Mr. Clay," said Elishama, "which you believe to have happened to the sailor on your ship, has never happened to anyone. All sailors know it. All sailors tell it, and each of them, because he wishes that it had happened to him himself, tells it as if it were so. But it is not so."

The old man in a voice hoarse with anger and disappointment asked, "Why should they tell it, if it were not true?"

Elishama thought the question over. "The sailors who tell this story, Mr. Clay, are poor men and lead a lonely life on the sea. That is why they tell about that rich house and that beautiful lady. But the story which they tell has never happened."

"If this story," said Mr. Clay, "has never happened before, I shall make it happen now. I do not like pretence, I do not like prophecies. I like facts. I shall turn this piece of make-believe into solid fact."

When he had spoken, the old man was easier at heart. He felt that he was getting the better of Elishama and the prophet Isaiah.

"The story shall become reality," he said very slowly. "One sailor in the world shall tell it, from beginning to end with everything that is in it, as it has actually happened to him."

Next midnight, as the clock struck, Mr. Clay took up the theme and said to Elishama, "I want the story which I told you last night to happen in real life, to real people."

"I shall see to it, Mr. Clay," said Elishama.

"I want it to happen here," said Mr. Clay and proudly looked round his big, richly furnished bedroom. "In my house. I want to be present myself, and to see it all with my own eyes. I want to pick up the sailor myself, in the street by the harbour. I want to dine with him myself, in my dining-room."

"Yes, Mr. Clay," said Elishama. "And when do you want the story to happen to real people?"

"It ought to be done quickly," said Mr. Clay after a pause. "It will involve expenses. I do not mind what they may come to."

"Yes," Elishama said, "it is going to cost us some money. For you will remember that there is a young woman in the story."

"The world is full of women," said Mr. Clay. "A young woman one can always buy, and that will be the cheapest thing in the story."

"No, Mr. Clay," said Elishama, "it will not be the cheapest thing in this story. For if I bring you a woman of the town, the sailor will know her for what she is. And he will lose his faith in the story." Mr. Clay growled a little.

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" And a young miss I shall not be able to get you," said Elishama.

" I am paying you to do this work," said Mr. Clay. " It will be part of your work to find me a woman."

" I shall have to think it over," said Elishama. But he had already, while they talked together, been thinking it over.

In Mr. Clay's office was a young accountant, Charley Simpson. He was an ambitious young man and had resolved to become, in his own time, a millionaire nabob like Mr. Clay himself.

Charley kept a mistress in town; her name was Virginie. She was, he told Elishama, a Frenchwoman of very good family, but she had been ruined by her amorous temperament and now lived only for passion. Virginie wanted a French shawl, and when Elishama took a selection to her house, Charley showed his gratitude by introducing him to the lady herself.

The lovers had had a row immediately before Elishama's arrival with the shawls. But the sight of these somewhat appeased Virginie. She had draped one shawl after another round her fine figure before the mirror as if the men had not been in the room.

The day after his last conversation with Mr. Clay, Elishama turned his steps again towards Virginie's house.

Virginie lived in a small, neat Chinese house with a little garden, and green shutters to the windows. The old Chinese woman who owned the house and kept it in order for her tenant was out. Elishama found the door open and went straight in.

Virginie was playing patience on her table by the window. She looked up and said, " Is it you? What are you bringing? Shawls? "

" No, Miss Virginie, I am bringing nothing today," said he.

" What is the use of you, then? " she asked. " Sit down and keep me company, now that you are here."

Virginie, in spite of her venturesome past, was still young and fresh, with a flowerlike quality in her, as if there had been a large rose in water in the room. She was dressed in a white muslin négligé with flounces and a train to it, but had not yet done up her rich brown hair, which floated down to the pink sash round her waist. The golden afternoon sun fell between the shutters into her lap. She went on with her patience, but spoke the while.

" Are you still with the old devil? "

Elishama said, " He is ill and cannot go out."

" Good," said Virginie. " Is he going to die? "

" No, Miss Virginie," said Elishama. " He is even strong enough to make up new schemes. With your permission, I am now going to tell you one of them."

" Well, as long as he is too ill to go out, I can stand hearing about him," said Virginie.

" Mr. Clay," said Elishama, " once heard a story, fifty years ago—on a ship, off the Cape. Now that he is ill and cannot sleep at night, he has been pondering over this story. He dislikes pretence, he dislikes prophecies, he likes facts.

" He has made up his mind to have the story happen in real life, to real people. He is the richest man in Canton, Miss Virginie, he

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must have what he wants. Now I shall tell you the story.

"There was a sailor," he began, "who went ashore from his ship in the harbour of a big town. As he was walking in a street near the harbour, a carriage with two fine horses drove up to him, and an old gentleman stepped out and said, 'You are a fine-looking sailor. Do you want to earn five guineas tonight?'"

Here Virginie cut short Elishama's tale. "I know that story. It happened in Singapore to an English merchant captain, a friend of mine. Has he been telling it to you as well?"

"No, Miss Virginie," said Elishama. "This is a story that lives on the ships, all sailors have heard it, and all sailors have told it. It might never have come ashore, if it had not been that Mr. Clay cannot sleep. He is now going to make it happen here in Canton, in order that one sailor in the world may be able to tell it from beginning to end, exactly as it has happened to him."

"He was sure to go mad in the end, with his sins," said Virginie. "If now he wants to play a comedy with the devil, it is a matter between the two of them."

"Yes, a comedy," said Elishama. "Now there are three people in Mr. Clay's comedy. The old gentleman he will play himself, and the young sailor he will himself find in a street by the harbour. But besides these two, there is also a beautiful young lady in it. On Mr. Clay's behalf I am now looking for this beautiful young lady. If she will come into this story, and finish it for him, Mr. Clay will pay her one hundred guineas."

Virginie laughed in his face. "What is all this?" she inquired.

"It is a comedy, Miss Virginie," said he. "It is a story."

Virginie's father had been a merchant in Canton. His motto in life, engraved on his signet ring, had been *Pourquoi pas?* All through his twenty years in China his heart had still been in France, and the great things going on there had filled and moved it.

Virginie was his eldest child and his favourite. As a little girl she was as lovely as a flower; the proud father amused himself taking her round, and with him Virginie had for many years lived in imagination in the grand world of the French court, in the vast radiant ballrooms of the Tuileries, among foreign majesties, court cabals, romantic love affairs, duels, and the waltzes of Strauss.

After her father's death, during long years of poverty and hardship, Virginie had secretly turned to this glorious world for consolation. She still walked up marble stairs lighted by a thousand candles, herself all sparkling with diamonds, to dance with princes.

Even when the father had endeavoured to inculcate moral principles in the daughter's young mind, he had illustrated them with little anecdotes from the imperial court. One of them had impressed itself deeply in the little girl's heart. The lovely Mademoiselle de Montijo had told the Emperor Napoleon that the only way to her bedroom ran through the Cathedral of Notre Dame.

Virginie was familiar with the Cathedral of Notre Dame—a big engraving of it hung in her parents' drawing-room. She had pictured to herself a bedroom of corresponding dimensions and

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in the middle of it the lovely Mademoiselle Virginie, all in lace. The vision many times had warmed and cheered her heart.

Alas, the way to her bedroom had not run through the Cathedral of Notre Dame! It had not even run through the little grey French church of Canton. Lately, it had run, without much of a detour, from the offices and counting-houses of the town. For this reason Virginie despised the men who had come by it.

Now she sat and listened to Elishama, with her arms folded, and her lustrous eyes half closed, like a cat watching a mouse.

"Mr. Clay," the young man repeated, "is prepared to pay you a hundred guineas if, on a night appointed by him, you will come to his house. This, Miss Virginie—"

"*To his house!*" Virginie rose from her chair so violently that it tumbled over. "Do you know what house that is? It is my father's house! I played in it when I was a little girl!"

She walked to and fro in the room so that her white gown swished on the floor. "That house," she said, at last, "was the only thing left me from the time when I was a rich, pretty, and innocent girl. Every time that I have walked past it since then I have dreamt of how I was to enter it once more!"

"So you are to enter it now, Miss Virginie," said Elishama. "So is the young lady of Mr. Clay's story rich, pretty, and innocent."

Virginie stared at him as if she did not see him at all. "You may hear it all now," she said. "My father and I used to talk—in that house—of great, splendid, noble things! The Empress Eugénie of France wore her white satin shoes one single time only, then made a present of them to the convent schools for the little girls there to wear at their first communion! I was to have done the same thing—for Papa was proud of my small feet!" She lifted her skirt a little and looked down at her feet, in a pair of old slippers. "The Empress of France made a great career for herself, and I was to have done the same. And the way to her bedroom—you can have it all now, you can have it all—the way to her bedroom ran through the Cathedral of Notre Dame! *Virginie,*" she added slowly, "*s'y comprend, en ironie!*"

"You will make a career for yourself, Miss Virginie," said Elishama, "no less than the Empress of France. Only it runs the other way. And why not, Miss Virginie?"

After a minute he repeated very slowly, "And *pourquoi pas?*"

She flung back her hair, raised her head, and sat behind her table like a saleswoman behind her desk. "Tell Mr. Clay from me," she said, "that I will not come for the price that he has offered me. But I would come for the price of three hundred guineas. That—in such terms as Mr. Clay will understand—is an old debt."

"Is that your last word, Miss Virginie?" he asked.

"Yes," said Virginie.

"Your very last word?" he asked again.

"Yes," she said.

"Then, if it is so," he said, "I shall now hand you over three

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hundred guineas." He took up his wallet and laid the notes on the table.

On the night that Mr. Clay had destined for his story to materialize, the full moon shone down upon the city of Canton and the China Sea. It was an April night, the air was warm and sweet. The oleander bushes in Mr. Clay's garden looked almost colourless in the moonlight, the wheels of his victoria made but a low whisper.

Mr. Clay, with much trouble, had been dressed and got into his carriage. Now he sat in it gravely, erect against the silk upholstery, in a black cloak and a top hat. On the smaller seat opposite to him Elishama, cutting a less magnificent figure, silently watched his master's face. This dying man was driving out to manifest his omnipotence, and to do the thing that could not be done.

They passed from the rich quarter of the town, with its villas and gardens, down into the streets by the harbour, where many people were about and the air was filled with noises and smells. At this time of day nobody was in a hurry.

A lonely sailor came walking up the street, gazing about him, and Mr. Clay ordered Elishama to stop the carriage and accost him. So the clerk got out and, under his master's eye, addressed the stranger.

"Good evening," he said. "My master, in this carriage, requests me to tell you that you are a fine-looking sailor. He asks you whether you would like to earn five guineas tonight."

"What is that?" said the sailor.

Elishama repeated his words. The sailor took a step towards the carriage to have a better look at the old man in it, then turned to Elishama. "Say that again, will you?" he said.

As Elishama spoke the words for the third time, the sailor's mouth fell open. Suddenly, he walked off as fast as he could, took the first turning into a side street, and disappeared.

At a sign from Mr. Clay, Elishama got back into the carriage, and ordered the coachman to drive on.

A little farther on, a square-built young man with the look of a seaman was about to cross the street, and had to stop before the carriage; he and Mr. Clay looked each other in the face even before it halted. Elishama once more got out, and spoke to him in the same words as to the first sailor. This young man came from a public house, and was somewhat unsteady on his legs. He, too, made the clerk repeat the sentence, but before Elishama had finished it, he burst out laughing and beat his thigh.

"Why, God help me!" he cried out. "This, I know, is what happens to a good-looking sailor when he visits the landlubbers. You need not say any more! I am coming with you, old master, and you have hit on the right man, too."

He vaulted into the carriage by Mr. Clay's side, stared at him, at Elishama, and at the coachman, and let his hand run along the seat.

"All silk!" he cried out, laughing. "All silk and softness! And more to come!"

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As they drove on he began to whistle, then took off his cap to cool his head. All at once he clapped both hands to his face and sat like that for a moment, then without a word jumped out of the carriage, began to run, and disappeared into a side street just as the first sailor had done.

Mr. Clay ordered the coachman to return to his house. They had already got out of the narrow streets near the harbour and onto the road leading to Mr. Clay's house, when three young sailors came straight towards them, arm-in-arm. As the carriage approached, the two at the sides let go their hold of the one in the middle and ran on, leaving the third one in front of it.

Mr. Clay stopped the carriage and held up his hand to Elishama.

"I will get out myself this time," he said. Slowly and laboriously he descended upon the arm of his clerk, took a step towards the sailor, stood still before him as straight as a pillar.

"Good evening," he said. "You are a fine-looking sailor. Do you want to earn five guineas tonight?"

The young sailor was tall, broad, and large-limbed, with very big hands. His hair was so fair and stood out so long and thick round his head that at first Elishama believed him to have on a white fur cap. He did not speak or move, but looked at Mr. Clay quietly. In his right hand he carried a big bundle; he now shifted it over to the left and began to rub his free hand up and down his thigh as if at the next moment he meant to strike out. But instead he reached out and took hold of Mr. Clay's hand.

The old man swallowed, and repeated his question.

The boy thought the question over for a moment. "Yes," he said, "I want to earn five guineas. I was thinking about it just now, in what way I was to earn five guineas. I shall come with you, old gentleman." He spoke slowly, with a pause between each of his phrases and with a quaint, strong accent.

"Then," said Mr. Clay, "you will get into my carriage. And when we arrive at my house, I shall tell you more."

The sailor set down his bundle on the bottom of the carriage, but did not get in himself. "No," he said, "your carriage is too fine. My clothes are all dirty and tarred. I shall run beside, and I can go as fast as you." He placed his big hand on the mudguard, and as the carriage started he began to run. He kept pace with the horses all the way, and when they stopped at the door of Mr. Clay's house he did not seem to be much out of breath.

Mr. Clay's Chinese servants came out to receive their master and to help him out of his carriage and his cloak. The butler, a fat and bald Chinese dressed in silk, appeared on the verandah and held up a lantern on a long pole. In the golden light of the lamp, Elishama took a look at the host and the guest.

Mr. Clay had strangely come to life. It was as if the young runner by his carriage had made his own old blood run freer; he even had a faint pink in his cheeks. He was satisfied with his catch out of the harbour of Canton. And very likely there was not another fish of just that kind to be caught there.

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The sailor was little more than a boy. He had a broad, tanned face and clear, light blue eyes. He was so very lean, his big bones showing wherever his clothes did not cover him, and his young face was so grave that there was something uncanny about him. He was poorly dressed, in a blue shirt and a pair of canvas trousers, with bare feet in his old shoes. He lifted his bundle from the carriage and slowly followed the butler with the lantern into Mr. Clay's house.

The lighted candles upon the dinner-table, in heavy silver candlesticks, were manifoldly reflected in the gilt-framed mirrors on the walls, so that the whole long room glittered with a hundred little bright flames. The table was laid, the food ready, and the bottles drawn.

Mr. Clay was helped into his pillow-filled armchair by the table and here sat as erect as in the carriage. But the young sailor, slowly gazing round him, seemed afraid to touch anything in the room, and had to be invited two or three times to sit down before he did so.

The first glass of wine had a quick and strong effect on the boy. As he put down the empty glass, he suddenly blushed so deeply that his eyes seemed to water with the heat from his burning cheeks.

Mr. Clay, in his armchair, drew one profound sigh and coughed twice. "Now, my young friend," he said, "I am going to tell you why I have fetched you, a poor sailor-boy, from a street by the harbour. Wait, and you shall hear all. For I have many things to tell you."

He paused a little, drew in his breath, and continued: "I am a rich man, I am the richest man in Canton. Some of the wealth, which in the course of a long life I have made, is here in my house, more is in my storehouses, and more even is on the rivers and on the sea. My name in China is worth more money than you have ever heard of. When, in China or in England, they name me, they name a million pounds."

Again he made a short pause.

"A million pounds," Mr. Clay repeated. "That million pounds is myself. It is my days and my years, it is my brain and my heart, it is my life. I am alone with it in this house, I have been alone with it for many years, and I have been happy that it should be so. For the human beings whom in my life I have met and dealt with I have always disliked and despised. I have allowed few of them to touch my hand, I have allowed none of them to touch my money.

"But lately," he went on, "I have comprehended that I myself shall not last as long as my fortune. The moment will come, it is approaching, when we two shall have to part, when one half of me must go and the other half live on. Where and with whom, then, will it live on?

"I have not troubled," he said, "to look for a hand into which I might like to deliver my possessions, for I know that no such hand

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exists in the world. But it has, in the end, occurred to me that it might give me pleasure to leave them in a hand that I myself had caused to exist.

"Thus, in combining the things of life and by making them co-operate according to my will, I may legally beget the hand into which I can with some pleasure leave my fortune, the lasting part of me."

He was silent for a long time. Then he dipped his own old, skinny hand deep into his pocket, drew it out, and looked at it.

"Have you ever seen gold?" he asked the sailor.

"No," said the boy. "I have heard of it from captains and supercargoes who have seen it. But I have not seen it myself."

"Hold out your hand," said Mr. Clay.

The boy held out his big hand. On the back of it a cross, a heart, and an anchor were tattooed.

"This," said Mr. Clay, "is a five-guinea piece. The five guineas which you are to earn. It is gold."

The sailor kept the coin on the flat of his hand, and for a while both looked at it concernedly. When Mr. Clay took his eyes off it he drank a little wine.

"I myself," he said, "am hard, I am dry. I have always been so, and I would not have it otherwise. But you are full of the juices of life. You have blood in you; you have, I suppose, tears. Gold you have tonight seen for the first time. I can use you.

"To you, tonight, the minutes only, the pleasure of your body, and the five guineas in your pocket will have real existence. You will not be aware that you are contributing to a worthy piece of work of mine. To the fine bafflement of my relations in England, who were once pleased to get rid of me, but who have now for twenty years been on the look-out for the legacy from China. May they sleep well on that."

The sailor stuck the piece of gold into his pocket. He was by now flushed with food and wine. Big and bony, with his shaggy hair and shining eyes, he looked as strong, greedy, and lusty as a bear just out of his winter lair.

"Say no more, old master," he broke out. "I know what you are going to tell me. I have, before now, heard it told on the ships, every word. This, I know, is what happens to a sailor when he comes ashore. And you, old gentleman, are in luck tonight. If you want a strong, hearty sailor, you are in luck. As for me, I shall know well enough what I am doing."

Once more the boy suddenly and violently blushed crimson. He broke off his bragging and was silent for a minute.

"I am not," he said, "in the habit of talking to rich old people. To tell you the truth, old master, I am not just now in the habit of talking to anybody at all. I shall tell you the whole story. A fortnight ago when the schooner *Barracuda* picked me up and took me on board, I had not spoken a word for a whole year. For a year ago, my own ship, the bark *Amelia Scott*, went down in a storm, and of all her crew I alone was cast ashore on an island.

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There was nobody but me there. It is not, tonight, more than three weeks since I walked there, on the beach of my island. There were many sounds on my island, but no one ever spoke. I myself sang a song there sometimes. But I never spoke."

The unexpected strain of adventure in his sailor and in his story came agreeably to Mr. Clay.

"Ah," he said, "so you have starved, slept on the ground, and dressed in rags for a year?" He looked proudly round the rich room. "Then all this must be a change to you?"

The sailor looked round, too. "Yes," he said. "This house is very different from my island."

"You are young," said Mr. Clay. "I presume that you were pleased when the ship came and took you back to people."

"I was pleased," said the sailor, "for one reason. But I had got used to the island, I had come to think that I was to remain there all my life."

"Were the nights long?" asked Mr. Clay.

"They were as long as the days," answered the sailor. "The day came, then the night, then the day. The one was as long as the other. Not like in my own country, where the nights are short in summer and long in winter."

"What did you think of at night?" asked Mr. Clay.

"I thought mostly of one thing," said the sailor. "I thought about a boat. Many times I also dreamt that I had got her, that I launched her and steered her. She was to be a good, strong, seaworthy boat. A sloop would be the thing for me, with tall bulwarks. The stern should be blue, and I should carve stars round the cabin windows.

"My own home is in Marsdal in Denmark. The old shipbuilder Lars Jensen Bager was a friend of my father's, he might help me to build the boat. I should make her trade corn from Bandholm and Skælskör to Copenhagen. I did not want to die before I had got my boat.

"When I was taken up by the *Barracuda*, I thought this was the first bit of my way to her, and that was the reason I was pleased then. And when I met you, and you asked me if I would earn five guineas, I knew that I had been right to come away from the island. And that was why I went with you."

"You are young," said Mr. Clay again. "Surely on the island you also thought about women?"

The boy sat silent for a long time and looked straight in front of him, as if he had in reality forgotten how to speak.

"Yes," he said. "On the *Amelia Scott*, and on the *Barracuda*, too, the others talked about their girls. I know, I know very well what you are paying me to do tonight. I am as good as any sailor. You will have no reason to complain of me, master. Your lady here, waiting for me, will have no reason to complain of me."

Suddenly, for a third time, the blood rushed to his face—it sank back, mounted again, and kept glowing darkly through the tan of his cheeks. He rose from his chair, tall, broad and very grave.

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"All the same," he said in a new, deep voice, "I may as well now go back to my ship. And you, my old gentleman, will take on another sailor for your job." He stuck his hand into his pocket.

The faint rosy tinge disappeared from Mr. Clay's cheeks. "No," he said. "No, I do not want you to go back to your ship. You have been cast on a desert island, you have not spoken to a human being for a year. I like to think of that. I can use you. I shall take on no other sailor for my job."

Mr. Clay's guest took one step forward, and there looked so big that the old man suddenly clenched the arms of the chair with his hands. He had before now been threatened by desperate men, and had beaten them off by the weight of his wealth, or by the force of his cool, sharp brain. But the irate creature before him was too simple to give in to any of those arguments. He might have stuck his hand in his pocket to draw out a knife. Was it, then, a matter of life and death to make a story come true?

The sailor took from his pocket the gold coin that Mr. Clay had given him, and held it out to the old man. "You had better not try to hold me back," he said. "You are very old, you have but little strength to stand up against me. Thank you, old master, for the food and the wine. I shall now go back to my ship. Good night, old gentleman."

Mr. Clay in his state of surprise and alarm could speak only hoarsely, but he spoke: "And your boat, my fine young seaman? The boat which is to be all your own, which is to trade corn from your own place to Copenhagen? What will she be, now that you are paying back your five guineas and going away? A story only, which you have been telling me—which will never come to be launched, which will never come to sail!"

After a moment the boy put the coin back in his pocket.

While the nabob and the sailor-boy were entertaining each other in the brilliantly lighted dining-room, Virginie in the bedroom, where tonight all candles had been softly shaded by rose-coloured screens, was preparing herself for her own part in Mr. Clay's story.

The room in which she found herself had been her parents' bedroom, where on Sunday mornings the children were let in to play in the big bed. The ornaments with which Virginie had embellished her bedroom of one night—the figurines, Chinese fans and bouquets—were all similar to those she remembered from her childhood. In this way Virginie had joined her gloomy existence of the last ten years with her gay and guiltless past of long ago.

She now began to dress and adorn herself. Virginie was an honest person in money matters; out of Mr. Clay's three hundred guineas she had conscientiously purchased everything belonging to her role. She had a weakness for lace, and was at this moment floating in a cloud of Valenciennes, with a coral necklace round her throat, pearls in her ears, and a pair of pink satin slippers on her feet.

She powdered and rouged her face, blackened her eyebrows,

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and painted her full lips; she let down her hair in rich silky ringlets over her smooth shoulders, and scented her neck, arms, and bosom. When all was done, she gravely went up to one after another of the long looking-glasses in the room.

These glasses had reflected her figure as a little girl, and had told her, then, that she was pretty and graceful. As she looked into them she remembered how, at the age of twelve, she had entreated them to show her what she would be like in years to come, as a lady. The child, she felt, could never have hoped to be shown, in a rosier light, a lovelier, a more elegant and bewitching lady. It was not till she heard steps in the corridor outside that she gave any thought to the third party in the story, her unknown guest of the night. Then for a second a little cold draught of contempt for Mr. Clay's hired and bribed puppet ran through her mind.

When the doorknob turned she cast down her eyes, and kept her glance fixed upon the sheet. But in this withdrawal there were as much energy and vigour as in any direct glance of deadly, uncompromising enmity.

Mr. Clay, in his long dressing-gown of heavy Chinese silk, came into the room, leaning on his stick. Two respectful steps behind him, a big, blurred shadow slowly crossed the threshold.

The one glass of wine that he had taken with his guest had acted upon the invalid of many sleepless nights. He had also, a few minutes ago, been frightened a little, and although in the course of his life he had frightened many people, fear for himself was a rare experience and might well stir his blood in a new way. But the old man was drunk with a still-stronger liquor. For tonight he was moving in a world created by his will and at his word.

He smiled a little, he was a little bit unsteady on his legs. For the first time in his life he was impressed by a woman's beauty. He gazed almost happily at the girl in the bed, whom his command had called to life. His dolls were behaving well. The heroine of his story was pink and white, and her downcast eyes bore witness to alarmed modesty. The story was making headway.

This was the moment, Mr. Clay knew, for the old gentleman's speech. He remembered it, word for word, from a night fifty years ago. Tonight, however, he felt mighty enough to disregard even the conventions of the story and to improvise on his own.

"You," he began, poking his forefinger at the girl in the bed, "and you"—without looking at him, he poked it at the boy—"are young. You are in fine health, your limbs do not ache, you sleep at night. And because you can walk and move without pain, you believe that you are walking and moving according to your own will. But it is not so. You walk and move at my bidding. You are, in reality, two young, strong, and lusty puppets within this old hand of mine."

He paused, the little hard smile still on his face. "So are all people puppets in a hand stronger than their own, the poor in the hands of the rich, the fools of this earth in the hands of the shrewd. They dance and drop as these hands pull the strings.

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" When I am gone," he finished, " and when you two are left to yourselves, and believe that you are following the command of your own young blood only, you will still be doing nothing, nothing at all but what I have willed you to do. You will be conforming to the plot of my story. For tonight this room, this bed, you yourselves with this same young, hot blood in you—it is all nothing but a story turned, at my word, into reality."

He remained standing by the end of the bed for another minute, leaning on his stick. Then with fine dignity he turned his back on the small actors upon the stage of his omnipotence.

As he opened the door Virginie raised her eyes. She looked straight at the figure of her father's murderer, and saw a withdrawing and disappearing figure. Mr. Clay's long Chinese dressing-gown trailed on the floor, and as he closed the door behind him it was caught in it—he had to open and close the door a second time.

The room remained without a sound or a stir till, in the very same instant, the boy took two long steps forward and Virginie, in the bed, turned her head and looked at him.

At that she was so mortally frightened that for a moment she wished herself back in her own house, even under the patronage, such as it was, of Charley Simpson. For the figure by the end of the bed was no casual sailor out of the streets of Canton. It was a huge wild animal brought in to crush her beneath him.

The boy stared at her, immovable except for his broad chest slowly going up and down with his deep, regular breath. At last he said, " I believe that you are the most beautiful girl in the world."

Virginie then saw that she had to do with a child.

He asked her, " How old are you? "

She could not find a word to say. The boy waited for an answer, then asked her again, " Are you seventeen? "

" Yes," said Virginie. And as she heard her own voice pronounce the word, her face, turned towards him, softened a little.

" Then you and I are the same age," said the boy.

He took another slow step and sat down on the bed. " What is your name? " he asked.

" Virginie," she answered.

He repeated the name twice and sat for some time looking at her. Then he lay down gently beside her on top of the quilt. In spite of his size he was light and easy in all his movements. She heard his deep breathing quicken, break off, and start again with a faint moan, as if something were giving way within him. They lay like this for a while.

" I have got something to tell you," he suddenly broke out in a low voice. " I have never till tonight slept with a girl. I have thought of it, often. I have meant to do it, many times. But I have never done it."

He was silent once more, waiting to hear what she would say to this. As she said nothing, he went on. " It was not all my own

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fault," he said. " I have been away for a long time, in a place a long way off, where there were no girls."

Again he stopped, and again spoke. " I have never told the others on the boat," he said. " Nor my friends with whom I came ashore tonight. But I thought that I had better tell you."

Against her will Virginie turned her face towards him. His own face, quite close to hers, was all aglow.

" When I was in the place, far away from here, that I told you about," he went on, " I sometimes fancied that I had a girl with me, who was mine. I brought her birds' eggs and fish, and some big sweet fruits that grew there, and she was kind to me. We slept together in a cave that I had found when I had been in the place for three months. When the full moon rose, it shone into it. But I could not think of a name for her. I did not remember any girl's name . . . Virginie," he added very slowly, " Virginie." And once more: " Virginie."

All at once he lifted the quilt and the sheet, and slid in beneath them. Although he still kept a little away from her she sensed his body there, big, supple, and very young. After a time he stretched out his hand and touched her. Her lace nightgown had slipped up on her leg; as now slowly the boy put out his hand it met her rounded naked knee. He started a little, let his fingers run gently over it, then withdrew his hand and felt his own lean and hard knee.

When at last he fell asleep he held her close to him as in a vice, with his face boring into her shoulder, breathing deeply and peacefully.

Virginie, who had lately thought of so many things, lay awake but could think of nothing in the world. She had never in her life felt such strength. It would be useless and hopeless for her, here, to try to act on her own. She felt his mighty grip round her like a hitherto unknown kind of reality that made everything else seem hollow and false.

In the middle of the night she suddenly remembered things that her mother had told her about her own people, the seafaring men of Brittany.

Old French songs of the sailor's dangers and of his homecoming, came back to her. In the end, from far away, came the sailor wife's cradle song.

When in the course of the night the boy woke up, he behaved with the girl in his bed like a bear with a honeycomb, growling over her in a wild state of greed and ecstasy. A couple of times they talked together.

" On the ships," he said, " I sometimes made a song."

" What were your songs about? " she asked.

" About the sea," he answered. " And the life of the sailors. And their death."

" Say a little of them to me," said she.

After a moment he slowly began to recite the words to her:

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As I was keeping the middle watch,
And the night was cold,
Three swans flew across the moon,
Over her round face of gold.

"Gold," he repeated, somewhat uneasily. And after a pause: "A five-guinea piece is like the moon. And then not at all like her."

"Did you make other songs?" asked Virginie, who did not understand what he meant, but somehow did not want him to be worried.

"Yes, I made other songs," he said. "About my boat."

"Say a little of them to me, then," she again asked.

Again he recited slowly:

When the sky is brown,
And the sea yawns, three thousand fathoms down,
And the boat runs downward like a whale,
Still Povl Velling will not turn pale.

"Is your name Paul, then?" she asked.

"Yes, Povl," he answered. "It is not a bad name. My father was named Povl, and his father too. It is the name of good seamen, faithful to their ship. My father was drowned six months before I was born. He is down there, in the sea."

"Do you like to think of that sort of thing?" she asked, somewhat alarmed.

He thought her question over. "Yes," he said. "It is good to think of the storms and the high sea. It is not bad to think of death."

A little while after, he called out, in a sudden, low cry, "I shall have to go back to my ship as soon as it grows light. She sails in the morning."

At these words a keen, deadly pain ran through Virginie's whole body. But the next moment it was again swallowed up in his strength. Soon after they both fell asleep in each other's arms.

Virginie woke up when the morning showed in grey stripes between the window curtains. The boy had loosened his grasp of her, but was still, in his deep sleep, holding on to her hand.

She watched the light growing stronger. Time was up, and she called his name twice. When he woke she told him that he must get up in order to be back on his ship before she sailed. He did not answer her, but clung to her hand, and in a while pressed it to his face, moaning.

She heard a bird singing in the garden and said, "Listen, Paul, there is a bird singing. The candles are burnt out, the night is over."

Suddenly, without a sound, like an animal springing, he flung himself out of the bed, seized her, and lifted her up.

"Come!" he cried. "Come with me away from here!"

His voice was like a song, like a storm, it lifted her higher than his arms.

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"I shall take you with me!" he cried again, "to my ship! I shall hide you there. I shall take you home with me!"

He tightened his hold of her, raising her as if to throw her over his shoulder. "I am not going to leave you!" he sang out. "I am not going to let anybody in the world part us, now that you are mine! Never, never, never!"

At this moment Virginie caught sight of their two dim figures in one of the looking-glasses. She could not have asked for a more dramatic scene. The boy looked superhumanly big, formidable now, like an enraged bear on its hind legs—and she herself, with her long hair hanging down, was the limp, defenceless prey. Writhing, she managed to get one foot to the ground. The boy felt her tremble; he let her down, but still held her close.

"What are you afraid of?" he asked, forcing her face up towards his own. "You do not believe that I shall let anybody take you away from me? You are coming home with me. You will not be afraid of the storms, or the blizzards, or the big waves, when I am with you. You will never be afraid in Denmark. There we shall sleep together every night. Like tonight, like tonight!"

Virginie's deadly terror had nothing to do with storms, blizzards or big waves—she did not even, at this moment, dread death. She feared that he should see her face, powdered and rouged, in the light of day. She dared not speak, for she did not feel sure of herself, and might say anything. But when she had stood for a minute, she collected her whole being to find a way of escape.

"You cannot do that," she said. "He has paid you."

"What?" he cried out, bewildered.

"That old man has paid you!" she repeated. "He has paid you to go away at dawn. You have taken his money!"

When he grasped the meaning of her words his face grew white, and he let go his hold of her so suddenly that she swayed on her feet.

"Yes," he said slowly, "he has paid me. And I took his money. But at that time," he cried, "I did not know!"

He stared into the air before him, above her head. "I have promised him!" he said heavily. Letting his head drop upon her shoulder, he buried his face in her hair and her flesh.

He lifted her, carried her back to the bed, and sat down on it beside her, his eyes closed. Time after time he raised her and pressed her body to his own, then laid her down again. Virginie was calmer as long as he kept his eyes closed.

"You will have your boat," she said at last.

After a long silence he said, "Yes, I shall have the boat. But you, what is going to happen to you, my girl?"

Virginie did not say a word.

"Then I must go," he said, "I must go back to my ship." He listened and added, "There is a bird singing. The candles are burnt out. The night is over. I must go." But he did not go till a little later.

"Good-bye, Virginie," he said. "I shall name the boat after

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you. I shall give her both our names—Povl and Virginie. She will sail with both our names on her, up through the Storstroem and the Bay of Köge."

"Will you remember me?" Virginie asked.

"Yes," the sailor said. "Always, all my life."

He rose. "I shall think of you all my life," he said. "How would I not think of you in my boat? I shall think of you when I hoist the sails and when I weigh anchor. And when I cast anchor. I shall think of you in the mornings when I hear the birds singing. I shall never think of any other girl, of no other girl at all. Because you are the most beautiful girl in the world."

She followed him to the door and put her arms round his neck. Here, away from the window, the room was still dark. Here she suddenly heard herself weeping. But I have one minute more, she thought, as she held him in her arms and they kissed.

"Look at me," she begged him. "Look at me, Paul."

Gravely, he looked her in the face.

"Remember my face," she said. "Look at my face well, and remember it. Remember that I am seventeen. Remember that I had never loved anybody till I met you."

"I shall remember it all," he said, "I shall never forget your face."

Clinging to him, her wet face lifted, she felt that he was freeing himself from her arms. "Now you must go," she said.

By the light of that same dawn Elishama walked up Mr. Clay's gravelled drive and entered the house. In the long dining-room the table was still laid, and there was still a little wine in the glasses. Only one last candle flickered in its candlestick.

Mr. Clay was there still, propped up with cushions in his deep armchair, his feet on a stool. He had been sitting up, waiting for the morning, to drink off at sunrise the cup of his triumph. But the night had tired him out. Elishama stood for a long time, motionless as the old man himself, looking at him. He had never till now seen his master asleep, and from his complaints and laments had concluded that he should never see him so. Well, he thought, Mr. Clay had been right; he had struck on the one effective remedy against his suffering. The realization of a story was the thing to set a man at rest.

The old man's eyes were slightly open, but his thin lips were closed in a little wry smile. His face was grey like the bony hands upon his knees. His dressing-gown hung in such deep folds that there hardly seemed to be a body in it. The whole proud and rigid figure, envied and feared by thousands, this morning looked like a puppet when the hand that has pulled the strings has suddenly let them go.

His servant and confidant sat down on a chair, listening for the usual whining and snarling in the old man's chest. But there was not a sound in the room. Elishama repeated to himself the words of his prophet: *And sorrow and sighing shall flee away.*

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For a long time Mr. Clay's clerk sat with him, meditating upon the events of the night. What had happened, he asked himself, to the three people who, each of them, had had his or her role in Mr. Clay's story?

After a while he wondered whether he ought to wake up Mr. Clay for the triumphal end of his story. But again he made up his mind to wait a little, and to watch this end himself first. He silently left the silent room.

He went to the bedroom door, and as he waited outside, he heard voices. Two people were talking at the same time. What had happened to those two in the night, and what was happening to them now? Someone was weeping inside the room, the voice came to the listener's ear broken, stifled by tears. Again Elishama quoted to himself the words of Isaiah: *In the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool.*

A little later the door was opened, two figures were embracing and clinging to each other in the doorway. Then they severed, the one sliding back and disappearing, the other advancing and closing the door behind him. The sailor of last night stood for a few seconds outside the door and gazed round him, then moved on.

Elishama took a step forward. He was loyal to his master and felt that he ought to get the evidence of Mr. Clay's victory from the boy's own lips.

The sailor looked at him gravely and said, "I am going away. I am going back to my ship. You will tell the old man that I have gone."

Elishama now saw that he had been mistaken the evening before: the boy was not so young as he had taken him to be. It made but little difference—it was still a long time till he would be as old as Mr. Clay, peacefully at rest in his armchair. For a long time yet he would be unsafe, in the hands of the elements, and of his own desires.

The clerk took upon himself to settle and balance up his master's affairs. "Now you can tell the story," he said to the boy.

"What story?" the boy asked.

"The whole story," Elishama answered. "When you tell what has happened to you, from yesterday evening till now, you will be telling the whole story. You are the one sailor in the world who can tell it truthfully, as it has actually, from beginning to end, happened to you."

The boy looked at Elishama for a long time. "What has happened to me," he said at last, "from yesterday evening till now?" And again, after a while, "Why do you call it a story?"

"Because," said Elishama, "you yourself have heard it told as a story. About a sailor who comes ashore from his ship in a big town. And he is walking by himself in a street near the harbour, when a carriage drives up, and an old gentleman steps out of it and says to him, 'You are a fine-looking sailor, do you want to earn five guineas tonight?'"

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The boy did not move. But he had a curious capacity of suddenly and imperceptibly collecting his great strength, and of turning it towards the person with whom he spoke, like some threatening, formidable weight, which might well make the other feel in danger of his life. So he had frightened Mr. Clay at their first meeting in the street, and again later in the evening, in the dining-room. Elishama, who had no fear in him, for a second was moved and stirred, so that he even drew back a little.

But the gigantic creature before him proved to be a peaceful beast. He waited a moment, then very quietly stated, "But that story is not in the least like what happened to me."

Again he waited a little. "Tell it?" he said slowly. "To whom would I tell it? Who in the world would believe it if I told it?"

He laid his collected, concentrated strength and weight into a last sentence. "I would not tell it," he said, "for a hundred times five guineas."

Elishama opened the door of the house to its guest of the night. Outside, the trees and flowers of Mr. Clay's garden were wet with dew; in the morning light they looked new and fresh, as if they had just this hour been created. The sky was red as a rose and there was not a cloud in it. One of Mr. Clay's peacocks screeched on the lawn; dragging its tail after it, it made a dark stripe in the silvery grass. From far away came the faint noises of the awakening town.

The sailor's eyes fell upon the bundle that he had left last night on a lacquered table on the verandah. He took it up to carry it away with him, then thought better of it, laid it down again, and undid the knots. "Will you remember to do something for me?" he asked Elishama.

"Yes, I shall remember," answered Elishama.

"A long time ago," said the boy, "I was on an island where there were many thousand shells along the shore. Some of them were beautiful—perhaps they were rare, perhaps they were only to be found on that same island. I picked up a few every day, in the morning. I took some of them, the most beautiful of them, with me. I meant to take them home to Denmark. They are the only things I have got, to take home with me."

He spread his collection of shells out on the table, looked them over thoughtfully, and in the end picked out one big, shining pink shell. He handed it to Elishama.

"I shall not give them all to her," he said. "She has got so many fine things, she would not care to have a lot of shells lying about. But this one is rare, I think. I think that perhaps there is not another one just like it in all the world."

He slowly felt the shell over with his fingers. "It is as smooth and silky as a knee," he said. "And when you hold it to your ear there is a sound in it, a song. Will you give it to her from me? And will you tell her to hold it to her ear?"

He held it to his own ear, and immediately his face took on an attentive, peaceful look. Elishama reflected that after all he had been right last night, the boy was very young.

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"Yes," he said. "I shall remember to give it to her."

"And will you remember to tell her to hold it to her ear?" asked the boy.

"Yes," said Elishama.

"Thank you. And good-bye," said the sailor, and gave Elishama his big hand.

He went down the verandah steps and along the drive with the bundle under his arm.

SOLUTION to ARGOSY CROSSWORD

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Across. 1, *Objective.* 9, *Motive.* 10, *Gorgeous.* 11, *Cobble.* 12, *Scheme.* 14, *Boot.* 15, *Tidal.* 16, *Merlin.* 18, *Hidalgo.* 21, *Panacea.* 24, *Laurel.* 26, *Aback.* 30, *Gear.* 31, *Seeing.* 32, *Bathos.* 33, *Mournful.* 34, *Cruise.* 35, *Unfeeling.*

Down. 2, *Brooch.* 3, *Eaglet.* 4, *Tooled.* 5, *Visible.* 6, *Coyote.* 7, *Diabolic.* 8, *Perennial.* 11, *Comma.* 13, *Mill.* 17, *Shellback.* 19, *Doubtful.* 20, *Gules.* 22, *Nice.* 23, *Oarsman.* 25, *Egoism.* 27, *Astute.* 28, *Kernel.* 29, *In turn.*

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SISTERS UNDER THEIR SKINS

A bright fire burnt in the grate, and some palest orchid-mauve silk curtains were drawn in the lady's room when Paul entered from the terrace. And loveliest sight of all, in front of the fire, stretched at full length, was his tiger—and on him—also at full length—reclined the lady, garbed in some strange clinging garment of heavy purple crêpe, one white arm resting on the beast's head, her back supported by a pile of the velvet cushions, and a heap of rarely bound books at her side, while between her red lips was a rose not redder than they—an almost scarlet rose.

Paul bounded forward but she raised one hand to stop him.

"No! you must not come near me, Paul, I am not safe today. Not yet. You bought me the tiger, Paul! Ah! that was good! My beautiful tiger!" And she gave a movement like a snake, of joy to feel its fur under her, while she stretched out her hands and caressed the creature where the hair turned white and black at the side and was deep and soft.

"Beautiful one! beautiful one!" she purred. "And I know all your feelings and your passions, and now I have got your skin—for the joy of my skin!" And she quivered again with the movements of a snake.

"Oh! Good God! If you knew how you are making me feel—lying there wasting your caresses upon it."

She tossed the scarlet rose over to him—it hit his mouth.

ELINOR GLYN, *Three Weeks*

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Blaze of Colour

The rainbow comes and goes,
And lovely is the rose

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

There were four apples on the tree,
Red stained through gold, that all might see
The sun went warm from core to rind;
The green leaves made the summer blind
In that soft place they kept for me
With golden apples shut behind . . .

There were four apples on the tree,
Gold stained on red that all might see
The sweet blood filled them to the core:
The colour of her hair is more
Like stems of fair faint gold, that be
Mown from the harvest's middle floor.

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE, *August*

Golden Seascape

A friend and I were walking under water among the rocky mazes of an inlet on the coast of Provence.

It was summer. We had gone down into the sea through a gate of golden sunshine. The noon sun seemed to pierce the sea like a spike, reaching through dense blue water to sandy paths winding among rocks.

We passed through a confused jumble of white rocks, sprouting violet sea-urchins, and then into the red and green light of rioting seaweed.

Every rock face was covered with a different species: clear carpets of *Acetabularia*, little concave discs waving about on stems the colour of sprouting corn, the soft foam of *Cystoseira* as

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delightful to thrust one's fingers into as the fleece of chestnut-coloured poodles.

Before us in the hazy light sargues pretended to be afraid, keeping their distance with gentle fin-flaps. Other blue, pink and dawn-gold fish idled in crystal caves. The soft, cool sea seemed designed for green plants and carefree life.

But I knew that on the surface, a few hundred yards from the shore, there were gardens scorched by summer heat with not a blade of grass nor a single flower. Pale laurel trees shrivelled up in the sun, and the hillside was dotted with the yellow splodges of burnt shrubs.

Leaves crumbled at a touch. In the market of Toulon a lettuce was a trophy.

In vain did the sea strew its glittering garlands; man had no use for them. The plants into which we thrust our hands were as useless a few feet under the seas as they would have been on Mars.

PHILIPPE DIOLE, *Undersea Adventure*

Rooky, Red Brick

I walk of grey noons by the old canal
Where rain-drops patter on the autumn leaves
Now watching from some ivied orchard wall
In slopes of stubble figures pile the sheaves;
Or under banks in shadow of their grass,
Blue water-flies by starts jettingly pass
'Mid large leaves level on the glassy cool;
Or noiseless dizzy midges winking round
The yellow sallows of the meadow pool;
While into cloudy silence ebbs each sound,
And sifts the moulting sunlight warm and mellow
O'er sandy beach remote, or slumberous flood,
Or rooky, red brick mansion by the wood,
Mossed gate, or farmyard hay-stacks tanned and yellow.

THOMAS CAULFIELD IRWIN, *Sonnets*

Greene Parret

The Parret hath all hir whole bodie greene, saving that onely about hir necke she hath a Coller or Chaine naturally wrought like to Sinople or Vermelon . . .

JOHN MAPLET,
A Greene Forest, 1567

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Harlequin Sketch

Red as the sky
That at sunset glows
Beyond the city walls.

Green as the pine
That rises pure
Out of the swirling mists.

Black as the cloud
That threatens rain
On a gloomy autumn day.

White as the snow
That heaps in drifts
On fabled Yao Chi's shore.'

WANG JUNG, *Song of the Four Colours*

Flaming Tinman

His face was black and bluff, and sported an immense pair of whiskers, but with here and there a grey hair . . . He wore a faded blue frock-coat, corduroys, and highlows—on his black head was a kind of red night-cap, round his bull neck a Barcelona handkerchief—I did not like the look of the man at all.

GEORGE BORROW, *Lavengro*

Many-Coloured Glass

A casement high and triple-arched there was,
All garlanded with carven imag'ries
Of fruits, and flowers, and bunches of knot-grass,
And diamonded with panes of quaint device,
Innumerable of stains and splendid dyes,
As are the tiger-moth's deep-damasked wings;
And in the midst, 'mong thousand heraldries,
And twilight saints, and dim emblazonings,
A shielded scutcheon blushed with blood of queens and kings.

JOHN KEATS, *The Eve of St. Agnes*

Miss Rainbow

My first dash into poetry was as early as 1800. It was the ebullition of a passion for my first cousin Margaret Parker . . . She looked as if she had been made out of a rainbow.

LORD BYRON, *Detached Thoughts*

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OF HUMAN KINDNESS

BY HUGH MICHAEL HOGAN

BEFORE June came and the sun melted the tar on its surface we used to roller-skate along the little High Street as far as the dairy, but usually we turned back again before we got quite as far as that, because we were afraid, somehow, of the dairy. Sometimes, when we were dared, we would leap from the road onto the pavement outside the shop; the wheels of our skates would make a hideous noise as they rolled over the uneven edges of the flags, and then we would go and hide, breathless, around the corner, and the boldest among us would peep out to see what happened.

Most often, nothing would happen, and then we would be scared to go past its door again in case somebody was waiting on the other side. Sometimes the curtains would part an inch or two, and a little of the woman's face would peer out from the opening; this would fill us with dread, and we would stand still for a long time behind the corner, and then go quietly away along the back streets to play in some other part of the town.

This was before anything happened in the dairy.

The first time I had to go into the dairy I was very frightened. It was hot, that morning. It had been hot during the night, and I woke early, before the dawn, and rolled back the bedclothes. I took off my pyjamas and lay naked on the warm, smooth sheets, letting the pre-dawn breeze play gently on my skin. The whole town slept. Gradually, as it became light, I could hear it awakening; the air became still again, and sounds came to me from neighbouring streets: the eager questions of a child, an old man's muttering, the opening of doors, the whistling of a kettle. I lay still, making pictures in my mind of the scenes; it seemed as if every window in the town were open, as if the huge, upthrusting sun were welding the people into one great family.

After a while I heard my mother get up and go past my room. I waited until I heard the sound of water running through the

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pipes, and the *plop* of the gas stove, and then I dressed and followed her downstairs.

The living-room smelt of tobacco smoke and whisky. Glasses stood beside chairs, and one, on its side, was on the floor. On the table was an empty bottle. My mother was standing on a chair, opening the window. She looked round as she heard me, then, "The milk hasn't come," she said. "You'll have to fetch it."

I felt the kink of fear in my stomach. "From the dairy?"

"From the dairy. Where else would you get milk?" She sounded cross.

I began to think about the woman in the dairy. About the dark eyes that peeped out from behind the curtain. "Couldn't we wait a bit longer? Perhaps the milkman will come soon. Perhaps he's coming now. I'll go and see."

She went into the kitchen, came back with a china jug. "Two pints, I want. I don't think the milkman will come. He was complaining of the heat yesterday." Her eyes went to the glass that lay on the floor. "Hurry up, your father will be wanting his tea." I put on my sandals and picked up the jug.

The paving was already hot to my feet as I walked to the dairy. I walked slowly, feeling its edges with my toes. In the lane that led onto the High Street I stopped, leaning against the wall; I thought that if I waited long enough the street might come to life, and then if anything happened to me inside the dairy there would be someone to run to. I waited a long time, perhaps ten minutes, until I heard a door open.

I turned the corner. The fruiterer's was coming to life. The smells of apples and oranges, and sweet, spicy odours came out through its open door. As I passed it, I knew at once how I would enter the dairy: I would leave the door open behind me, so that I could escape if I had to. I walked on to the dairy, and looked in. There was little to see. The front was of marble, and there was a big marble slab in the window with two smaller marble platforms behind it, cut like steps. At the back and over the door, were thick lace curtains. In the middle of the marble slab was a basket; it was old and broken, and in it were a few eggs, brown ones and white, and propped up against the basket was a piece of thick cardboard. On the card was written, NEW LAID EGGS. I walked up the steps and opened the door.

I had been wrong about the door. So long as it remained open, a-bell rang inside the house. For a long time I could not move, and the noise seemed to grow in intensity until I thought it must make the woman angry. I slammed the door shut, and stood against it; my hands were sweating and my throat was dry.

It was cold inside the shop. The walls were of marble, right

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to the ceiling, and a wide marble counter ran round three sides. Great cylinders of butter, cheese, and lard stood on shelves at the left, and on the right was a big new bacon machine, painted red and silver. In the centre, so high that I could see it beyond the counter, was a huge metal chest. It gave off a gentle humming noise.

There was no sound from the house. Beyond the counter was a glass door, lace-curtained, and I watched it for the shadow that would tell of someone's coming. There were steps leading from the doorway down into the shop.

My fear began to leave me. I decided that, if nobody came very soon, I would go home and say to my mother that the shop had not opened yet. Perhaps on the way I could get a tin of evaporated milk, so that I should not have to return.

I was wondering whether to do this at once, when I saw a shadow behind the curtain. Then the door opened, and down the steps and into the shop came—a man.

I had been waiting for the woman whose face I had seen as she peeped out onto the street, and it had never occurred to me that there could be a man in the shop. Seeing him, I did not feel so afraid. He came along the counter and stopped opposite me. "Good morning, sir."

It was the first time anybody had called me "sir," and at first I thought he was mocking me. But when I looked at him more closely I began to see that he was not that kind of man. His eyes were big and soft, like a spaniel's, and he had an eager, friendly voice.

"Two pints of milk, please." I went over to the counter and held out the jug. He leaned over to look at me, but made no move to take the jug.

"Haven't seen you before, have I?" He spoke quietly. "Do you live here?"

"The man didn't come," I said. "Is he sick?"

"They're all sick. Sick in the heart. Sick in the soul." He said this more to himself than to me, then, "Will you be coming for the milk, now? What's your name?"

"Yes. My name's Francis."

"Francis. That's a nice name. Yes. Francis." He looked at me steadily for a moment, and then out of the window. Suddenly he turned back. "If I'd had a boy I would have called him John."

"I wish I'd been called John. Francis is a soppy name."

He took my jug. "Oh, now, I wouldn't say that. I wouldn't say that. It's just that, for a boy, John's best, I think. John's a good name to have." He leaned on the counter. "You know,

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it's easy to be John. You don't get your leg pulled with a name like John. I mean, other kids don't take it out of you so much."

"I know," I said. "I make them call me Frank. Francis is soppy. It's a girl's name."

He nodded gently. "Yes. Yes, I think that's about the best thing you could do."

Over our heads there was a sound. A board creaked. He looked up, then moved towards the door. "You'll have to excuse me a minute. The milk's out in the yard. Two pints, isn't it?"

When he had gone I began to wonder about him. I wondered how it was that I had never seen him before. I liked him; it was easy to talk to him. He had grey hair, and so I knew that he must be very old, but he didn't talk like other grown-ups I knew. It was like talking to one of the gang. I thought that perhaps it was his being so small that accounted for it. He was small and thin and gentle, and looked as if he hadn't grown up very far, not like my father. I wondered if being little made it easier for a man to talk with boys. I was still wondering about this when he came back, and put the jug on the counter.

"Do you smoke?" he asked.

"No." When I had said it I realized that he would not have minded if I had spoken the truth.

"No, you don't want to start too early. How old are you?"

"I'm past nine."

"Yes, sixteen's plenty old enough to start smoking. Though, mind you, if I had a boy and he was going to smoke, well, I'd rather he smoked before my face than behind my back."

I did not know what to say to this. My father would have lynched me if he had caught me with a cigarette. Thinking like that about my father made me remember. I said, "I think I'd better hurry with the milk."

"Oh yes." He took up my jug. "Will you be calling again tomorrow, then?"

It seemed to matter to him, somehow, that I should come again. "Yes, I expect so."

He went around the counter and opened the door for me before giving me the jug. "So long, then, Frank."

I walked slowly away with the milk. When I got to the corner past the fruit-shop I turned; he was still standing there, on the steps of the dairy.

My mother was not angry when I got home. "They've given you good measure," she said.

Next morning I was up early, and took the jug from the kitchen before my mother was awake. When I got to the High Street I

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saw by the clock in the watchmaker's window that it was only a quarter to seven, but the dairy was open, and the man was on his hands and knees scrubbing the black-and-white tiled floor. The smell of soap mingled with the smells of cheese and bacon.

"You're early, Frank." He sat back on his heels to look at me. "You must be a good getter-up." He was in shirt-sleeves, and had no collar on. The shirt was open almost to his waist and I could see that his chest was very thin, the skin white, like dough. "What did you do with yourself yesterday?"

"I went to the burns," I said. "For tiddlers."

"Get any?"

"A few."

"Ah." He looked at my arms and legs. "You've caught the sun nicely."

"My father made me throw them out," I said. "The tiddlers. He wouldn't let me have them in the house." I did not tell him that I had cried.

His face went suddenly crimson; the cloth he was holding began to shed water on the floor. After a moment he noticed the water and began to swab it up, wringing the cloth out into the bucket.

"Ever been rabbiting, Frank?"

"No. I'd like to go, though."

"Ah, grand sport it is. You'd need a gun, of course." He sat up on his heels, looked out through the window. "If I had a boy I'd take him out rabbiting. Certainly. I'd get him a little gun, a .410 shotgun, maybe, and away we'd go, together, just the two of us. I'd show him all the best places. Or I might get him a .22, maybe. Grand sport, that. Lying in the hedgerows waiting for Brer Rabbit to come out. Ah, lovely. Evening's the best time."

He looked out through the window for a long time, then began to attack the floor again, making quick, vigorous movements with the cloth until the tiles were gleaming.

When he had finished, he wrung out the cloth and took the bucket away behind the counter. He wiped his hands and rolled down his sleeves before coming back to take my jug. "Same again, is it, Frank? Two pints?"

I said yes, but he made no move to go. Instead, he leaned against the counter to look at me.

"What are you going to be when you grow up, Frank?"

"I have to be a magistrate's clerk, like my father."

"Have to be? Who says so?"

"My father. He says I have to be one. I don't want to be. I want to be an officer on a ship, like my uncle."

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"I see." The man's face looked sad again. "Perhaps things'll change, Frank, and you won't have to be a magistrate's clerk. You'll see. Things'll get better as you grow up. You'll grow big, most likely, and then you'll be able to please yourself about it. I wouldn't worry too much, Frank."

There was a long, companionable silence between us. At my back, the street was beginning to come to life. Doors opened and closed; people began to move about inside the houses, their slippered feet lisping across floors; the newly washed tiles of the dairy gleamed wetly in the morning sun. In the silence I watched its light creep slowly towards the counter, and then I saw, outlined against the lace-curtained door leading into the shop, the tall, thin figure of the woman.

The man asked, "Have you got any brothers or sisters, Frank?"

For a long moment I could not speak.

My mind was busy with the thought that the woman had been watching us for some time. There was a still, silent menace in the outline of her form.

"There's somebody there," I said at last.

A change came over his face as he looked up. It was as if the light and the warmth of his nature died away inside him, until I was left looking only at a thin little man with grey hair and a scrawny neck. He took up my jug, moved away towards the door.

I stayed where I was until he returned with the milk. As he came back into the shop I watched the doorway behind him; there was nothing to see. He put the jug on the counter and pushed it towards me. "Got to hurry now, Frank. Very busy today. See you tomorrow, then."

But I did not see him next day, for then I left the town with my family, and we stayed at the seaside three weeks: it was August when we returned. No rain had fallen in all that time and the town was hot, every surface in it painful to the touch. The people in the town were weary of the dry, exhausting heat; when they stood together to talk their figures drooped, and their voices were flat and listless. The gossips at the corners of the streets looked often at the sky.

It was afternoon when I went to the dairy again. It was cool in there, even cold. The bell rang loud across its silence until I closed the door; as it died away its note was echoed by the gentle hum of the metal chest. I waited for a long time, watching the inner door.

The man came out into the shop. He seemed paler, greyer than when I had seen him last, but I knew that he was pleased to

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see me. His eyes looked up and down my body, slowly over my sun-browned arms and legs, with an expression I had seen in my mother's eyes when I had done something that pleased her. He looked at me like this for what seemed a long time, and then the corners of his mouth curled upwards in a smile.

There was a movement behind. I turned to see the woman outlined in the doorway. Her face was thin and white and ghostly; her short, dull black hair was brushed back from her forehead and pinned at the nape of her neck. Her cheeks were sunken, her lips lacked colour or shape.

"A pint of milk, please," I said. It seemed as if I shouted, so loud did the words sound on the icy silence.

She stared at me from the great, dark hollows of her eyes. One bony hand moved to her throat, caught at the woollen cardigan she wore over a thick, black dress.

"Just one pint." My voice was loud, urgent. I could not help it. I think that by shouting I hoped to shatter the tension.

"Yes," said the man, "just one pint." He took my jug and moved away. Slowly, very gradually, I edged towards the door, stood there with my back to it.

I watched the floor. For an eternity I watched the floor, my eyes tracing a path along the edges of its squares; along the black, up the white, up the black, along the white, up, along, up, along, up . . .

The woman was still in the top left-hand corner of my view. I knew that she watched me, but I could not look up. I shifted my weight, first to one leg, then to the other. I looked at the butter, at the lard, at the bacon machine. At last, compelled by my fear, I looked at the woman.

She had not moved. She stared at me. For a long time there was no movement anywhere, and then, slowly, her bloodless lips moved back into the hollows of her cheeks. It was a smile like the grin of a corpse. I felt the hair rise on the back of my neck, and suddenly I knew that I was screaming, screaming with terror, but screaming inside myself. My voice was still silent, my mouth was still shut.

In a moment the man was opposite me. He held out the jug. I took it from his fingers, and hurried from the shop.

Next day my mother called me in from the garden, where I was playing. She had a basket in her hand, and in the bottom of the basket lay a slip of paper, neatly folded.

"From the dairy," she said. "I've written everything down on the paper." She put twopence into my hand. "You can get some sweets for yourself."

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I did not want to go again into the dairy, and for a long time after I left the house I stayed in the lane that led to the High Street. I needed the twopence badly, but it meant nothing compared to my terror of the woman. I wondered if I dared go back and tell my mother that I was afraid, but then I realized that she might tell my father. My father said that he was afraid of nothing, and I knew that I could not explain my fear to him.

Suddenly it dawned on me that I had no jug, and that there could be no milk on the order. That meant, of course, that the man would not have to leave the shop to fetch the milk, and so I could not be left alone with the woman. I began to worry about what I should do if the woman were in the shop alone, but when I got to the dairy they were both there.

They looked up as I entered, but for some time neither made a move towards me. I knew that they had been talking about me before I came in, and after a moment the woman looked directly across at the man. The corners of her mouth were turned down; from under her grey cardigan she put out a long, thin hand to take the paper I held out to her. The hand was white, bony, transparent almost; the nails were bitten down to the quick, and around them the tips of her fingers were red and swollen.

"Cheese," she read out, "and butter. Two pounds each." Her voice was cold, flat, lifeless as the marble fittings.

The man moved over to the cheese. There was a long, thin wire—about four feet of it—hanging near the cheese, on a nail. The ends were coiled tightly around small toggles of wood. He took the toggles into his hands and, throwing the wire deftly over the huge cylinder of cheese, guided it up gently, swiftly, until it was within a few inches of the top. His hands were crossed over his chest, and as he pulled them apart again the wire bit deep into the cheese, slicing through the top to a depth of three inches. Without removing the severed top of the cheese, he cut from it a smaller piece by throwing the wire above the cylinder and pulling it sharply downwards. He took a cloth and wiped clean the wire, hung it back in its place before putting the cheese on the scales. The needle steadied at exactly two pounds; he smiled shyly across at me.

"Butter, two pounds," said the woman, and, when he had weighed that out, "Lard, two pounds." She did not move.

The man wrapped up the cheese and the butter and the lard. He gave me a dozen eggs from the basket in the window, and placed them all in my basket. On leaving the shop I had difficulty with the door: the bell rang loudly until I closed it behind me. As I hurried past the window I could see the thin, dark shape of the woman behind the curtain, and I knew that she watched me.

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The day after that I had to go again to the dairy. For ham, this time. It was almost tea-time, and I knew that the woman would be there. As I walked down the garden towards the gate, I saw that my sister was awake; the covers of her pram were thrown back, and her fat little legs were sawing at the air. It gave me an idea. I called back to my mother, " Can I take Margaret? "

She thought about it. " If you're very careful."

I eased Margaret up into a sitting position and pushed the pram towards the dairy. When I got there I put on the brake of the pram and went quickly inside. The man and the woman were both there, and I stopped in the doorway, the bell ringing furiously.

" Half a pound of ham," I shouted. " I can't come in. I have to watch the pram." I pointed at the pram, shut the door from outside. Then I began to feel foolish and confused.

I wondered if they would take any notice of me, or if I should have to go back inside the shop to repeat my order. For a long time nothing happened. I strained to see behind the curtain at the back of the window. I dared not go back, and began to feel sick with fear. Then, quite suddenly, the door opened, and the man was standing on the step, my purchase in his hand.

He closed the door behind him, came shyly down the steps to the pavement. " Is this your little sister, Frank? " He looked reproachful. " You didn't tell me you had a little sister."

" I have another one at home," I said: " Maureen."

" Maureen." He spoke the name quietly, went towards the pram.

" No, this one is Margaret. Maureen's the other one."

" Ah, Margaret." He put out a hand and touched her on the cheek. She smiled, showing both teeth. " Margaret," he said. " Margaret." He stroked her face and she made a gentle crooning noise. " She's beautiful, beautiful."

He looked away. " If I'd had a little girl I would have called her Judith. Judith's a beautiful name. It would go well with John, eh? John and Judith. Or Judith and John. Yes, Judith and John." He bent down on one knee beside the pram. He stroked the chubby calf of Margaret's leg, and took her toes between his fingers. " Chooky choo," he said. " Chooky chooky choo . . ."

My sister laughed. She had a merry, throaty, fat baby's laugh, but he did not laugh back at her. Slowly I realized that he was no longer looking at her. I followed his gaze towards the window of the shop, where the woman peeped out through parted curtains. Malice was in her sunken eyes, contempt in the curl of her bloodless lips.

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"I'll have to be going," I said.

Next day the milkman came back on his round, and I did not have to go any more to the dairy.

The storm came halfway through September. For days before it came, the sky had been like a sheet of molten brass, and the town was shrivelled in the heat, the paintwork on doors and windows rising in ugly blisters, the tar on the roads running liquid into the gutters. The streets were bare of people until evening, and in the churches there were prayers for rain.

When the cloud came into the sky the people came out to see it. All over the town, windows and doors were opened, and necks craned to see the cloud. Voices were raised as neighbour called to neighbour; old men smiled wisely, and forecast rain.

The cloud stayed over the town. In the evening it was joined by another and then another, and then a wind rose and the sky was filled with cloud, white cloud, grey cloud, blue cloud, rippling and scudding and bubbling across the sky like froth until, towards sunset, it stopped. Then the sky was red and yellow and mauve and green and brown and purple, and in the east it became black, and as the darkness reached out towards the sun the first blinding flashes of light came, and the first thunder began to growl, distantly at first, then coming nearer, nearer to the town. The first rain fell coldly, vertically, in drops as big as pennies.

I ran home when the rain came. My mother sat there in darkness; every light was out, every window open. Great, jagged prongs of lightning ripped across the sky; the air was close, electric. The rain beat down, drumming in fury against the pavements, and the thunder roared, growing louder, louder, until the earth seemed to tremble at its noise.

And then, quite suddenly, it ceased: the thunder, the lightning, and, more gradually, the rain. And the moon came up and a wind rose with it, sweeping the summer out of the town.

The morning after the storm the town was cold and the roads were hard again, and after breakfast I put on my skates and went on to the High Street. I stayed at the end of the street and got myself used to the feel of the skates again, and when I felt sure of myself I did some figures of eight, forward at first and then in reverse. When I looked up I saw a woman beckoning me from the edge of the pavement.

"Man wants you," she said. "Down there."

The man stood on the steps of the dairy. I went down to the shop, let him lead me quickly inside. I paused to take off my skates, but he shook his head.

"No need, Frank." His voice was low, scarcely audible.

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"She's not here any more." I had to strain to hear him. His face was grey, bearded with stubble. "It was the storm," he said. "The storm did it." He walked away from me, behind the counter. "Frank," he said, leaning towards me.

I went over to him then, my skates ringing loudly on the tiles. Twice he opened his mouth as if to say something, but each time turned away again. After a silence lasting several minutes he said, "Your father's a magistrate, Frank, isn't he?"

"He's a magistrate's clerk."

"Ah well, something like that, then." He lowered his face onto his hands, looked at me gravely for a while, up and down, up and down. His eyes were red-rimmed. He moved his hands through his hair, and then slowly, roughly, over his face, as if he were washing it. At last he gave me a tired sort of smile.

"Wait here a minute, will you?"

He went away through the door at the rear of the shop; it seemed a long time before he came back again, holding out a letter. "Give this to your father, Frank. Will he be in? Tell him I'll wait."

"Yes." I took the note and hurried from the shop. I caught my father just as he was leaving the house. He scowled at me, put on his spectacles, and tore open the envelope. "Good God!" he said. "Good God!" He took me roughly by the arm and led me inside. Calling my mother, he told her, "Don't let this child out of your sight."

"What is it?"

"Something's happened at the dairy."

Then I saw his lips forming the word. "Murder," he said.

But I did get out of the house again. I reached the High Street just before the van came, with the police in it. They were a long time inside the dairy, and soon the pavement outside the shop was filled with people. I stayed on the other side of the street and waited; I wondered if the policemen would handcuff him, or if they would tie him up with ropes. Then I saw the door open, and two policemen come out and move back the crowd.

They had not handcuffed him. When he came out, he paused for a moment in the doorway and looked down on the crowd. He had shaved, and wore his collar and his tie, and had his coat on. As he stood there, looking about him, it seemed that he had a dignity and a bearing that he had never had before. I wept then.

There was complete silence in the little street as all eyes turned on him, and then a woman called out shrilly, "Murderer!" Others took up the cry, and the policemen drew their truncheons; those beside the man took his arms and led him out to the vehicle.

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With one foot on its step, he turned to the crowd.

" Not murderer," he said. " I didn't kill her. She was dead long ago."

The crowd murmured.

" Dead long ago," he shouted. " She never came to life." He climbed up into the van, cried down at the crowd, " Never came to life. Do you understand? Never came to life. Never! never! never! You don't know what it did to me! "

The policemen climbed in after him and shut the door, and the van drew away. For some time after it had turned the corner the crowd stood still, and then slowly it moved off along the street. Some of the people walked past me, as I leaned against the wall. I heard one say, " I wonder how he did it."

For a little while I wondered about this myself, and then I remembered what he had said about the storm. And I saw him then, quite clearly, amid the thunder and the lightning and the rain, going over to the cheese, where the wire hung beside it on the nail. And I saw him take its toggles in his hands, walk up swiftly behind the woman, his arms crossed high above his chest . . .

For a long time afterwards the dairy stood empty, and we never went near it to play. Then, when the spring came round again we took to skating past it once more, leaping from the road onto the pavement outside the shop. I was always afraid when I did this. In the autumn the dairy was taken over by a firm of multiple grocers. They rebuilt the front of the shop and used the back and upstairs for storage. I don't think anybody ever lived in it again.

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SOLE OF HONOUR

I didn't understand why he had to lock the shop, and Mr. Burchett explained, " Well, the ladies like to be tattooed in such out-of-the-way places . . ."

" Such out-of-the-way places? " I asked.

" Well, look at last week," said Mr. Burchett. " Two ladies came in, and wanted doing on the soles of their feet. Well, only one foot each, I mean, and they promised me they weren't ticklish."

" But what on earth would a lady have tattooed on the sole of her foot? "

" Well," said Mr. Burchett, " one had a horse's head, and the other had her family crest, and ' Death Before Dishonour.' "

CYRIL RAY, *Family Crest, My Foot*

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AMERICAN JACK

BY J. A. BROWN

"TO the thief, another man's money is like a beautiful girl already promised," said Shadrach Meshach Abednego Kumalo, the Zulu medicine-man. He pointed through the roots and barks and skins hanging over the window of his dark little shop.

His customers saw the man the Johannesburg police call American Jack. He looked hungry and dejected, and his fine clothes were crumpled.

"He has been sleeping in a water-pipe," said Kumalo. His Zulu, Xosa, and Sesuto customers, the dark people of Alexandra Township near the white man's city of Johannesburg, nodded. Everybody agreed with Kumalo.

There was a story in the township that once there was a man who did not agree with Kumalo. One morning his wife woke to find a black-beetle in bed with her. She hit it with the broom-stick. Her husband was never seen again. Some said he had run away—but those who knew shook their heads.

"He will steal your fine car," said Mpitso the flatterer.

"He may try to," said Kumalo, filing away at a piece of lion skull to make up a prescription for bronchitis. And he smiled. He had smeared the handles of the Chevrolet with a preparation that would make a thief let go as if he had picked up a red-hot coal.

American Jack stopped in the doorway and rapped his knuckles on the crocodile skin hanging there. Then he slouched on.

"He will be gaoled, that one," said Mpitso the flatterer.

"He is just out of gaol," said Kumalo. "There was a day when he came to my shop and spoke without respect to me. I gave him the ismonya medicine that is made of the fat of the hippo and is very good for those who make some venture. But because he spoke to me without respect, I put into it a pinch of something else. The result you can see."

They looked, and they shook their heads to see what became of one who had not had respect.

Shadrach Meshach Abednego Kumalo—Kumalo is Zulu for Smith—had got to his magic-shop late that Monday morning

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because he had been up late on Sunday, trying to lay a ghost for Mrs. Mosako of 18 Primrose Lane, Pimville, Johannesburg. He was carrying a smart leather briefcase with the letters S.M.A.K. on its side. It held a lionskin cap and the remains of the herbs he had burnt under the nose of the ghost—with excellent results.

There were two customers on the doorstep as he parked his Chevrolet at the kerb. One was a child with a tiny bottle. "That'll be twopennyworth of crocodile oil for the whooping-cough," he guessed. The other was dressed—as he thought—like an American in a light linen suit with padded shoulders, narrow trousers, a cowboy belt, shoes with soles two inches thick, and a tie that had made even the blind beggar at the corner avert his eyes.

American Jack was his name. Profession: thief.

As Kumalo opened the door, the child saluted him respectfully in Zulu.

"Hiya, Doc," drawled American Jack.

Kumalo kicked aside a pythonskin that had fallen off the wall and put on his lionskin cap. "How's your little brother this morning, my son?" he asked the child.

"He is coughing better, lord."

Kumalo took down a grubby glass jar full of chunks of yellow crocodile fat and poured off a little oil.

"A teaspoonful to be taken before meals," he prescribed, and charged two pennies.

"How's Doc?" said American Jack, slouching in and sitting down on a pile of elephant shinbones covered by a leopardskin.

"How would you feel if you had spent the night wrestling with a ghost seven feet tall?" said Kumalo. "A ghost with eyes like red-hot coals, a ghost who was haunting the privy of Mrs. Mosako and would not let the family . . . you see what I mean?"

"Doc," said American Jack, who had not been nearer to America than the Talkie Palace at Alexandra, "I need a little shot of something."

"What's the trouble?" said Kumalo, who knew what he needed but could never resist bragging about his achievements. "I have a little special something here that will keep snakes out of the house. Guaranteed to last all summer. I had a customer last week who sprinkled it on the doorstep. Seven puff-adders went to the house next door instead of to hers and frightened the old granny into a fit. Four white doctors from the hospital could do nothing for her. I, Shadrach Meshach Abednego Kumalo, alone could help her."

"I got no snake trouble, Doc. I'm shorta dough. I wanta stacka jack."

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Kumalo picked his yellow teeth with a dried eagle's claw—very lucky. "I can give you the invisible oil. No clothes are worn. I sell a lot to jealous husbands. Five pounds ten shillings the small bottle."

"I only got a shilling," scowled American Jack.

"In that case," said Kumalo coldly, "you can do no better than a small bottle of ismonya." He took down a jar of purple liquid and allowed American Jack to sniff. It was made of hippo fat, sandalwood, and purple dye. "You rub it over the eyebrows," said Kumalo.

American Jack looked sour. He had used ismonya before, with mixed results. He had succeeded in rolling a drunk but had been hit on the head by a nightwatchman with a kerrie a moment later.

Kumalo said, "Remember the saying: *the hyena does not eat liver at the lion's kill.*"

"Who's a hyena?" jerked American Jack. Kumalo shrugged.

American Jack gnawed at his fingers and thought of the money that was being wasted at that moment, money he didn't have; he thought of horses that would run unbacked and oceans of skokiaan that would never be drunk; he thought of girls who would go without new dresses, and he groaned. He hit the counter so hard with his fist that a monkey's skull rolled onto the floor.

"Careful," said Kumalo. "That's for a customer."

"So what?" said American Jack. "Gimme a shilling ismonya." He slouched out with the bottle.

"This generation has no manners," said Kumalo, and turned into the shop to make a prescription for a rich old man who had fallen in love with a beautiful girl who scorned him.

All day American Jack had nothing to eat, but he kept rubbing his eyebrows with the ismonya and believing that something good was coming; he was so hungry he could have stolen a bone from a dog. But he couldn't see a dog that had a bone.

Night had come when he slunk past the Children of Israel Africa Amen Church and saw a chink of light. He put a bloodshot eye to the hole and saw two old men kneeling on the stamped earth floor, praying. Between them a pile of bank-notes uncurled on the table. "Some racket," breathed American Jack.

The preacher was praying: "Dear Lord, our old friend Jonas is giving this heap of money to the church because he knows he's going home and he wants to look down on the church and see it paid off."

"Hallelujah!" cried old Jonas.

"Amen," said American Jack, reaching through the hole.

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The two old men looked up. Both had powerful African lungs, but they were too shocked to make a squeak. "Good old ismonya," said American Jack.

Behind him the old men began to bawl: "Catch him! He's got the money for the church."

All along the narrow streets doors in the mud houses opened, and the yells of "Stop thief!" went along almost as fast as American Jack.

The regular drinking of skokiaan, brewed by a shebeen queen, who put a spoonful of carbide and a dead rat or two into her liquor to give it body, had not improved American Jack's stamina. He was wheezing like the old harmonium at the Children of Israel Africa Amen Church. When he couldn't take another step, he rolled over a low mud wall and found himself in the widow Sakabona's garden of pumpkins.

"Ha," said American Jack and, quick as a wink, scooped a hole under the only pumpkin he could see, and put in the money. He was walking off casual-like when he was stopped by a posse of honest citizens armed with clubs and battle-axes.

"That's him," said one honest citizen. "He's sweating."

"It's a hot night," wheezed American Jack.

"He's blowing," said the citizen with the hatchet.

"It's my lungs," said American Jack. "People I breathe on drop dead."

This convinced the honest citizens that they had tackled the wrong man and they ran on, yelling, "Stop thief!"

Just at dawn, American Jack returned to Jenny Sakabona's house and looked over the wall. He saw a terrible sight. Jenny was surrounded by her brood of hungry children. They were lifting the only pumpkin in the garden.

"Au," said Jenny Sakabona, and sat down. "Money grows in my garden." Then she yelled the same thing. Neighbours rushed out and, seeing what had happened, began to tear up their gardens. Carrots, cabbages, pumpkins, shrubs, even fruit trees flew over the walls. It was an awful sight. But not so awful as that of Jenny Sakabona leading her troop up the road to Ranku's Cash Store, waving the bank-notes and yelling: "It's magic. Money grows in my garden."

American Jack knew it was magic that had led him to the money. But this—this was all wrong. He dabbed on more ismonya and ran after Mrs. Sakabona. She had just got to the store, and Ranku, with his shaven scalp and fat, ring-covered hands, was yelling: "No credit. Let them starve. I don't care."

The great and the rich are always angry, Jenny knew, so she spoke timidly. "Money grows in my garden."

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" Let's see it, then," said Ranku. She uncovered the roll of notes.

" My dear Mrs. Sakabona," said Ranku, fairly sweating to get his hands on it, " you are always welcome. And the dear children. Splendid little fellows. Do they like chocolate? " He put his hand on the head of the youngest child who was so frightened he sank his teeth into the pudgy fingers. Ranku winced but smiled more widely than ever. " I'll ask my wife to make us a cup of tea."

He smiled himself into the parlour and said to his wife, " Quick, put on the kettle. There's a simple woman in the shop with a fortune in her hand. Says it grew in her garden."

His wife peeped through the door at Jenny. " Mrs. Sakabona! It's magic all right. Why not tell her that for a half share in her garden she can get all her groceries here free? "

Ranku smacked his knee. " I'll make her sign a paper so she can't change her mind. We'll make a fortune out of this."

Mrs. Sakabona was trying a feather boa round her neck. She gave a guilty jump when Ranku came out of the parlour.

" Charming, Mrs. Sakabona," said Ranku. " Come inside and have a cup of tea." She sat down nervously in the best chair and looked in awe at the grand furniture, a huge Victorian sideboard with ornaments all over it.

" All you have to do," Ranku was saying, " is sign this little paper." Jenny made her mark and they all shook hands, the Rankus winking with delight.

American Jack looked in the shop door and watched the widow's children gorging themselves on chocolate and trying on sailor caps. He hated them. But when the widow came out of Ranku's parlour, wearing the feather boa, he stepped forward, smiling confidently.

" Mrs. Sakabona," he said, " I have been sent from the white man's bank in the city to take care of your money for you. The great white boss said: ' Go to Mrs. Sakabona and tell her that there are many wicked men in Alexandra Township— ' "

" Ai," she said, " it is true."

" ' They will steal her money. Her children will starve. She must be helped.'

" I will give you a proper receipt, Mrs. Sakabona," said American Jack. " Now, how much is it? "

" I've given it to Mr. Ranku," she said.

American Jack almost choked. " But . . . but that was wicked. It wasn't yours."

" Au, there is plenty more," she said. " It grows in my garden—under the pumpkins."

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"How can you be so simple?" shouted American Jack.

She looked sorry for him. "Everybody knows it grows in my garden. Come, children."

They trotted off, the widow displaying her feather boa to right and left, and the children sucking oranges and casting the peels aside with a recklessness which made American Jack quite faint. Then he looked in the back window of Ranku's house and saw Ranku putting the roll of notes into a tin high up on the Victorian sideboard.

He sat all day on the pavement, waiting for it to be dark and watching the citizens digging up their gardens. At night he broke into Ranku's house and was just lifting down the tin when Ranku woke up and shouted: "Who's there?"

American Jack jumped, and started all the cups and jugs jigging on the shelves. Ranku's wife sat up and began to scream. American Jack's nerve broke. He dived through the window. Ranku began to blow a police-whistle. Dogs barked, night-watchmen shouted and brandished kerries. American Jack was so badly rattled that he threw the bundle of notes over a wall. They fell into a tree.

Under the tree a boy called Daniel and a girl called Lizzie Golule lay in each other's arms.

The boy said: "Your father knows that we love each other. Why will he give you to this old man?"

"Because he has money to pay the lobola my father wants for me."

"Why does God allow such a thing to happen? Why does He not do a miracle?"

The girl implored the sky. "Oh Lord, help us to find the money we need."

A wind stirred the tree and the bundle of notes plumped into her lap.

American Jack heard their shout: "Money has fallen from heaven to save us."

"No, no," he shouted, flinging his leg over the wall. He saw the lovers running, heard their joyful laughter. He ran after them as far as Old Golule's scrap-yard and, climbing over a shifting heap of bottles to the window, saw Old Golule counting the lobola. Satisfied that it was the price he was asking for his daughter Lizzie, he embraced the boy and blessed them both. Then he dug up the floor with his clasp-knife and buried the money in a corner.

The thought of his money just under the floor and nothing but a crumbling mud wall to stop him from getting at it inspired American Jack. He stole a spade from the yard of the grave-

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digger who lived next door, and when all was quiet began to cut away at the wall.

Just as he got his hand on the money, Old Golule woke with a snort. He had dreamt that the lobola was a pound short and had wakened in a sweat to count it. He saw American Jack wriggling out through a hole in the wall, and raised such a cry that the whole street was awakened.

American Jack did not know which way to run. Hatchets were being brandished in all directions. In his panic he ran into the first open door he saw. It was the Children of Israel Africa Amen Church and it was lit by the stub of a single guttering candle. At the altar was a coffin on trestles. American Jack peeped over the edge and saw an old man lying with his hands clasped. It was old Jonas who had wanted to give his money to the church.

American Jack gave a superstitious jump and was about to make a run for it when he heard a door at the back of the church opening.

He pushed the bundle of notes into the old man's hands and sat down on a bench in an attitude of deep mourning.

The old preacher came in and raised his hands in benediction.

"Amen," groaned American Jack.

"He was our friend," said the preacher, and sadly he looked into the coffin. There was a roll of bank-notes. He grabbed at it and fell on his knees.

"It's a miracle. Heaven has returned it. Shout Hallelujah, brother."

"Hallelujah," groaned American Jack.

"Shout it again, brother."

"Hallelujah," croaked American Jack. Then he recovered. "Respected preacher, you should put so great a sum in the bank in the city. I work there."

"Do you, my son?"

"They have a great iron room where they keep money safe."

"We should trust one another," said the old preacher.

"Alexandra is full of wicked men. Give it to me and I will take care of it."

"You are a good young man."

"Yes, respected preacher," said American Jack humbly.

"I would not like to see wicked men assault you for this money, my son. Therefore I will keep it in my bed till morning and pay it directly to the builder. Then, my son, the church is ours."

Next morning, when the preacher got up to take the money to the builder, he found American Jack on the doorstep.

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"I'll come with you, respected preacher," said American Jack. Faint but hopeful he went along to the builder's yard.

"Why does he look so sad?" the builder asked the old preacher. He was making out the receipt for the final payment of the church.

"He lost a dear friend," said the old preacher.

★ ★ ★

ANSWERS to BRAN TUB on page 20

1. *Straight* (*the hump is fat*)
2. *a. Lady Macbeth b. Cleopatra c. Elizabeth I*
3. *a. a long bolster b. courage induced by alcohol c. hoe with blade reversed, that is pushed, not pulled d. auction with bidding starting at highest price and working down*
4. *The Archbishop of York* (*The Archbishop of Canterbury is designated Primate of All England*)
5. *Save Our Souls*
6. ∧, ~, &
7. *a. Evelyn Waugh b. Bernard Shaw c. Nancy Mitford d. Compton Mackenzie*

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NEIGHBOURS

There are queer goings-on in the house next door—
Come close, we must talk in quieter tones—
Since that dark-eyed man, and the woman, came;
But I ask no questions, Mrs. Jones.

They keep themselves to themselves all day;
No radio, mind you; but telephones
Buzzing and buzzing, and then all night—
But I ask no questions, Mrs. Jones—

All night I can't get a wink of sleep,
Not a wink, for the tramping about and the groans
And no voice, only the woman's voice;
But I ask no questions, Mrs. Jones.

Two strangers came last Friday week,
A fat man one, the other all bones;
And I've only seen the thin one leave,
But I ask no questions, Mrs. Jones.

That night I woke, and I seemed to hear
A scuffling sound, then sobs and moans,
And four feet running upstairs and down,
But I ask no questions, Mrs. Jones.

Before it was light, the man went out—
I do not think *it was filled with stones—*
With a sack, I could almost swear, on his back:
But I ask no questions, Mrs. Jones.

G. ROSTREVOR HAMILTON,
The Russian Sister

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Patrick Fitzgerald O'Connor first took the Road to the Isles on a three weeks' honeymoon : he has stayed there ever since, and the magic of the Western Highlands has turned this Irish ex-Army officer into a Scots laird with a passion for the sea and for hunting—not deer nor grouse nor good red herring, but shark.

He has an unquenchable thirst for adventure, spiced with danger, and is quite undeterred by serious injuries received early in the war.

In his best-seller, "Shark-O," he has written of his adventures in a 36-foot boat on the track of these five-ton monsters, but in this new story he describes an even greater terror and a sharper struggle—the battle of four men in a gallant little boat against all the massed fury of the elements.

Argosy's gripping new sea story

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Storm

by P. FITZGERALD O'CONNOR

THERE was nothing unusual about the boat, certainly nothing pretentious. The same type of seiner can be seen any day almost anywhere off these coasts and, for all I know, off the English ones too although I believe the basic design—beam a third of your length—originated here in the north to withstand these circuitous seas.

So—fifty to fifty-five foot long and beamy with a foc'sle forward where Joe had just hurriedly washed up four china mugs from a fly dish of tea, a hold amidships and, under the wheelhouse aft, a hundred and twenty horsepower of diesel engine at present engaged only in driving the winch and coiler—tub-shaped and solid like that, the *Poosie Nancy* lay at a momentary standstill out off the Hebrides. Its three-mile drag on the bed of the sea completed, the net was bolting clear to the surface with several fathoms of rope still to come. And outside now, watching it, Joe broke into a small fandango dance on the stern, his battered, knowing little face puckered up in expectancy.

"Look at her floating, Mungo-boy—right back there! Four boxes in her this time or I'm a liar, bet you. Bet you five bob!"

"Not me, Joe. Why should I give you money?"

"My, ain't you mean? A miserable bleeding nigh enough, that's what you are. Don't know what Angus was thinking of, taking you—"

"Oh, all right." Mungo Starke pushed back a lick of his

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straight black hair. In a generous heave of the deck just then, in the measured thud of the engine beneath, in his whole physical appointment here on this boat that he'd joined some eight months ago, he felt a continuous gratification he would have found hard to put into words. He widened his pale blue eyes which were so pale that it seemed one ought to be able to see right through them into his brain, and grinned. " But have you got five bob, Joe? "

" Have I—? " The other clapped his hands to his thighs, then scowled. He smoothed the skirt of his oilskin primly. " You," he broke off, " you couldn't box kippers, you couldn't, you great iron. Here, look out—we'll have the net in the perishing engine-room next! " And bending over the stern fairlead, a set of removable metal rollers whose prong was embedded in the gunwale, he pedalled his fingers along the ropes as they stammered through it and up to the winch. " All right, Donald—throw 'em off! "

In front of the wheelhouse Donald MacPhee, Angus MacFarlane's big-boned capable nephew, stopped the coiler, then threw the ropes off the winch.

He stood back on deck. He twisted a curl of his short fair hair. His serious eyes on the search, as it were, to surprise any hint of naughtiness on their part, he studied the ropes attending the brailler pole and the squat functional mast. Donald made certain further arrangements with the winch, then swung the brailler pole out in readiness for heaving the catch aboard.

And inside the wheelhouse meanwhile, his inch-long grizzled hair standing up sturdily free on the crown of his head, Angus MacFarlane lifted his grey-spotted jersey, scratched at his chest underneath, and thought, Aye, aye, the four of us works together just very nice. He raised his eyes.

They'd been working today to windward of one of the smaller isles, and the Scottish mainland, an indeterminate jumble of peaks, lay thirty or forty miles to the west. A northerly gale, earlier threatened by wireless, had amounted to little more than a few brisk squalls and a long swell in the sea. It was late afternoon; the rest of the Scarvaig fleet was streaming off home for an early weekend; last to pull up her gear, the *Poosie Nancy* comfortably wallowed. And with his hand returned to the wheel and gently vibrating, Angus awaited the time to move off with no more thought or concern for that regular throb of his engine below than he had for the steady tramp of his heart in his breast.

Mungo said, " All yours, Donald. Heave away."

Donald said, " Slack off, Joe. A wee bittie more."

Then the net came up on the brailler pole and the pole swung inboard and over the hold.

Mungo jerked the knot on the end of the net. The net opened up and the catch slithered out and slammed down into the hold. Joe said, " Roll on, cocoa. That lot was worth staying out for, eh? " And at this stage Angus might have engaged forward gear. But at that moment Angus MacFarlane was looking at Mungo Starke.

A tilt of the head, a glimpse of the rollneck sweater showing over

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the oilskin—some indefinable quality always present about the other and often catching Angus's eye—had reminded the older man of his son. Ian had not really looked like Mungo-boy, of course. Not all that much anyway. Not so much that anyone else would think it, that is; and perhaps, really, not at all. The catlike manner of moving, maybe . . .

Angus sighed. In his mind just then was a Sunday eight months back in Scarvaig when, looking out of this very wheelhouse, he'd seen the image of his dead son standing before him on deck, come off the pier in the blue rollneck sweater and the old battledress trousers the boy had always been in the habit of wearing. It had been a trick of the afternoon light, of course. The man before him had been a stranger, and his voice was the voice of an educated person such as Angus would never have had on his boat, when he said, " I was looking for Angus MacFarlane. I hear he's short of a hand."

And in any event there had been just a terrible string of no-goods in Ian's place by that time; for over two years had passed since the night when a man off a trawler, drunk and not helpless-drunk like Joe got drunk when alone and ashore but dirty-tongued drunk and belligerent, had barged into Ian so that Ian, for all his catlike manner of moving, had been unable to catch himself up and had fallen off the head of the pier and just gone down through the dark—thirty feet at full ebb, they'd said—into the hold of a cargo boat tied alongside, smashing his back as he bounced off the hatch-coaming. It was just a good thing that his mother had not been alive at the time to hear of it.

A light of small sorrow came into Angus's eyes.

Joe came past to tidy up astern. He gave a fat wink of complicity. " Got any umbrellas there, Angus? Going to come down wet before we get home."

Angus smiled his surprisingly gentle smile, then, retrieving himself, reached forward to light up his pipe before starting off on the five-hour passage after the rest of the fleet.

The *Poosie Nancy* rolled.

Crouched on the stern platform which was there above deck level to facilitate normal shooting of the net, Joe spat on his hands.

" Can't get this perishing fairlead out," he complained bitterly.

He shifted his stance, turned his body sideways and, bending over the gunwale, again tugged upwards. A swarming of gulls screamed overhead in seeming derision. The fairlead didn't budge.

Joe played his next card. To give himself more purchase he put one foot on top of the gunwale. But still the fairlead remained in its seat.

" You're not trying," grinned Mungo, coiling a short rope sling on the platform.

Joe grimaced.

Mungo returned to the quarter. In the bows, Donald started

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to hose down the decks; in the wheelhouse, Angus fiddled with some of the levers. There was a deep boiling of water under the stern and the *Poosie Nancy* began to move off.

"Bastard thing," said Joe and put both feet on the gunwale.

If he hadn't lost hope or perhaps if Mungo hadn't been watching, Joe might not have vented his spleen with so little caution. As it was the fairlead responded this time, but very abruptly. It came clear of its socket, followed the wild arc of Joe's upflung arms with gathering force and then, as Joe involuntarily opened his grip at the top of his swing, it continued to fly through the air until, having used up all that impetus twenty feet out, it dropped to the sea.

Meanwhile Joe was elaborating his swing.

"Hold it!" shouted Mungo with another wide grin.

Joe tried hard to obey. He twisted his body inwards but his feet had already slipped outwards; he flung his arms up once more, but by then he was on his way down. A small man, he landed across the gunwale with his head and the upper part of his chest inboard. But small or not, too much of Joe was over the side.

He began disappearing.

His fingers, frantic, clawed at the platform. They touched something, gripped it: this was the short rope sling. Joe vanished from sight; the sling snaked after him over the gunwale; a small shackle spliced on the end of the sling made a slight thud as it struck the woodwork, then it too vanished.

Mungo laughed heartily, picked up a heaving line, ran to the stern.

But Mungo soon stopped laughing, for Joe, like so many fishermen—and although he had been with Angus for over ten years Joe was not even that by early vocation, having started adult life as a very bewildered street arab from an East-End London orphanage—was no swimmer. And Joe, wearing his big white seaboots and a smart new suit of oilskins, was far too troubled with all the water around and over his head to get hold of the line when Mungo threw it across him.

The circle of thrashing sea, in the centre of which was Joe, slipped ten, then fifteen yards astern. It was getting on for thirty or forty by the time Mungo had shouted to the others, stripped himself of his oilskins and seaboots, and followed Joe over the stern. And by then Donald had come from the bows and Angus had realized what had occurred.

Mungo was a strong swimmer. Even as he jumped he had recalled how, as a child in Ireland, he had been taken daily into the sea by his father before his father died.

His body was lithe. His muscles moved with a smooth and efficient co-ordination. And meanwhile his brain reacted in much the same manner.

He heard the engine behind change note and he knew that Angus had put the gears of the *Poosie Nancy* into reverse. He saw the circle ahead vary in agitation and he knew that Joe wasn't good for

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much longer. He passed a long white object in the sea and that, he knew, was the short rope sling that Joe had pulled over the stern. And after he'd passed it Mungo remembered that this particular sling hadn't been used for several days and was bone-dry inside and that, he realized, was why—in spite of the weight of the shackle—it had only just started to sink.

Somehow, somewhere in the back of his mind, this last thought troubled him. It nagged for a second, materially.

But materially, there's a limit to how many images even the coolest brain can accept for immediate interpretation, and meanwhile other, seemingly more vital transmissions were on their way. From memory: those seaboots—they're full of air and they're up in the air and he's panicking, so he won't get them off. From vision: I can't see when I drop in the trough of this swell but I expect he'll still be in that direction. An aside: it's a hell of a swell all right—must mean bad weather's coming. Then from the sense of touch: what's this part down here—is it his head?—Yes, it's his hair. Then: "Joe, for Pete's sake, relax or I'll have to belt you."

And many many more, all of which had to be dealt with.

But at last, like a recurring phrase in a passage of background music, the nagging thought of the rope came through, was this time accepted, was analysed, was translated. And immediately: Hell, yes! as its full implication struck on his mind like a realized insult.

"Angus! Out of gear!"

On the stern, Donald heard the cry, but for a moment couldn't make out what it meant.

In the wheelhouse, Angus just didn't get it.

Yet, oddly enough, Angus was thinking of doing exactly what Mungo wanted, although for a different reason and without the same measure of urgency. If he took her out of gear in a moment, he was telling himself, the boat should be under sufficient way to bring her alongside the men in the water.

He was judging it nicely. He started moving his hand to the gear-lever. But on that instant—before his hand left the wheel, really—there was a grinding noise from astern.

Angus knew what it meant. His experience told him with instant and frightful clarity: something was caught in the screw, the propeller.

How it had got there or what it was, Angus didn't know. But he did know that, in turning, the blades of the screw had snatched some object out of the water and taken it into its body, and he knew that every succeeding turn of the screw would twist whatever it was in further—further and further in and around the blades and then, if it didn't break or fluff out, further and further into the space between the male shaft of the screw and its outer female covering.

And because he knew the full implications of that, because he knew they were not in a harbour with other boats round at hand

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but were fifty miles out with the last of the Scarvaig fleet disappearing, and because of a lot of other rather serious bits of knowledge as well as a deep if inarticulate love of his boat, Angus intended moving his hand that much faster than he'd ever moved it before. He intended moving it very fast.

But he just wasn't fast enough.

On that same second the grinding turned to a growl, the engine laboured. There came a shriek of metal in anguish, followed instantly by a terrible sound from below as if someone were wielding a mighty hammer against the cylinder blocks. And momentarily rattled, Angus hesitated, his hand stilled in the air.

And then it made little odds whether he moved his hand now or whether he moved it tomorrow.

The thing had happened. The throbbing, confident life of the boat, which to seamen implies life for themselves, had gone out of the *Poosie Nancy*. That hundred and twenty horsepower of diesel engine was smothered, its momentum was irretrievably checked. Admittedly this thing hadn't quite finished. Two more cylinders fired, but they fired with belated defiance and it might have been better had they refrained, for at each futile stroke of the pistons that terrible punishing hammer clanged. Once. Twice. Then hand or no hand, it was over. They were immobilized.

For an hour? For two hours? Be dark in two hours.

The *Poosie Nancy* was silent.

And, yes, it had all happened in the time it takes to make that remark slowly: The *Poosie Nancy* was silent.

How? The reason made little odds at the moment. Soberly Angus reviewed the fact.

Then he returned both hands to the wheel and looking astern at the men in the water he saw that Mungo was holding his own and he reassured himself of the fact that, in spite of the contrary wind, the *Poosie Nancy* still had sufficient way to take her back close enough for Donald to throw out a line.

Then, keeping the sternward course, Angus allowed his thoughts to return to those sounds below and he searched in his mind to find blame of himself for what had occurred, but he couldn't find blame, since he understood that he wasn't an utter automaton. So Angus thought of the screw once more and the thought that came to him this time was: Six feet down under the stern.

"Ah me," said Angus aloud to himself in the wheelhouse.

Out on the quarter meanwhile, Donald, who knew just as much and no more than Angus of what had occurred, wished he had something more active to do than merely to stand there waiting. For out on deck that grave silence below, that choking-off of the normal background throb, had allowed the seldom-heard sound of the sea swooshing along the sides of the boat to leap into sinister prominence.

Donald didn't like the fact of the sea leaping at him like that. He was not an imaginative man—weighty, instinctive, material,

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he was the right type for fishing—and on the living, confident boat he accepted with stolid Gaelic phlegm whatever the seas and the heavens contrived to produce. For, alive, the *Poosie Nancy* had shown she could safely stand on her stern and wave her keel in the air if needs must be, treating the sea as a casual if somewhat capricious ally. And Donald had known this of the boat since leaving school at the age of fourteen.

But Donald as well as Angus knew that the sea as an ally was a very different affair from the sea as a master. And the *Poosie Nancy*, although she was still on the move astern, although she was still asserting herself on the sea, would very soon lose the last of her way, would very soon lose the initiative, would very soon hand the mastery over. Out here alone.

And then?

And then she would just be a wallowing corpse.

And *then*?

And then if they didn't manage to fix something up—Well, then Donald didn't quite know. But he thought it prudent to glance at the sky.

Not very nice: dirty black builders all the way round, and especially there to windward. It was just a pity they hadn't their fancy wireless transmitter working: they might have let someone know about this if they had. But they hadn't. They'd only got wireless reception, and—what had the weather man said on the one o'clock news?

With speculative eyes then Donald regarded the seas. Nothing to help them there—not even a smudge of smoke. And there wouldn't be—not on this passage tonight. Only these grey, white-topped rollers which, reaching down from the north, came past and went on, went on—oh, my goodness—to that wee island behind.

Wee? Well, five or six miles along its length, the way we see it from here. Five or six miles of coast . . . And he'd promised Jessie he'd take her to see the shinty finals at Ballachulish tomorrow . . .

Donald swung the line in his hand. He was impatient of having such thoughts, ashamed of possessing such powers of imagination. Isn't that just very silly of me, he chastised himself, to be thinking about that island—why, surely it's quite a number of miles away. Anyhow, meantime here are these poor men in the water.

Of the two in the water it seemed that Joe—even if he'd got the auditory message of those clanging sounds—had not found them worthy of notice; for supported and breathing some air at last, Joe apparently had all his mechanisms turned on attempting to drown Mungo. But Mungo had got the message. And Mungo, who imagined he knew what had happened, was astonished to think that a rope could have stalled the engine so instantly, so finally. He was applying his mind to surprise a more credible answer when Joe laid his hands on a further supply of energy and they both sank.

"Pack it up," pleaded Mungo as they rose to the surface. "Look—we're almost home." And over Joe's head he shouted,

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"It's a rope, Angus! It's one of the slings you've got in your screw!"

No one questioned his knowledge. But Donald grinned and Angus threw up his hands in a show of relief.

"Well, well, Mungo-boy. If it's only a wee scrap of rope, we'll soon have that sorted!"

A number of gulls still circled the boat, their beady-eyed heads swivelling from side to side as they viewed the four men below with utter dispassion. Crablike, losing the last of her way, the *Poosie Nancy* mounted the flank of an oncoming roller. She was going to pull up several yards short of the men in the water, Donald saw.

He drew back his arm, flung the line. It snaked out accurately, striking Mungo across the forehead. Mungo grasped it, embraced Joe; Joe struggled and the two of them sank once more. Uncertain, the *Poosie Nancy* reached the top of the next one.

The two men surfaced.

Mungo waved; Donald pulled on the line. Thrashing about, Joe was impelled willy-nilly towards the boat. Arrived at the hull he scrabbled at it, despairingly. Angus nodded approval, looked at the sky.

Then the *Poosie Nancy* slid downwards into the trough of that roller and swung round broadside on to the rest of the long insensate seas. And away to the south, in a direct line with the blow of the wind, that low isolate island received on its varied coastline the very same rollers that, earlier, had lifted the buoyant, sturdily active fishing-boat up on their shoulders in passing. From this distance the island looked rounded and soft, and dimpled.

Like a little pillow casually dropped on a huge, undulating eiderdown.

One way and another quite a lot of water came out of Joe as well as twenty or thirty of Mr. Heinz's best baked beans. Yet he was up and about and wearing dry clothes in a surprisingly short period of time.

Shamefacedly preceding Mungo out of the foc'sle hatch, he was saying, "... don't know what came over me, straight I don't." He stood on deck and turned round, his battered, knowing little face creased into perplexity. "Not that I was *really* frightened, mind. Well, maybe a bit. It's—" The attempt at bravado vanished. "It's queer, that's what. It does something to you. All that bleeding water—like someone was holding a load of perishing blankets over your dial, only worse. You just bleeding got to get out, see?"

He ballooned his cheeks then puffed them flat in a small explosion, submitting. "But I wouldn't have thought I'd have acted like that. Not to a bloke what was trying to help me. Not to my pal, I wouldn't." Then with sudden anxiety, "Would you? I mean..."

Yet, having posed the question, he quickly turned his head from

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Mungo. He happened to turn it towards the stern where the others were up to something peculiar. But Joe didn't take in what the others were doing. Joe was waiting for Mungo's response with all the loneliness of an orphan bared in his face.

Mungo said, "You weren't frightened, Joe. You were upside-down when I reached you. Your seaboots were full of air, like big rubber buoys." And since this didn't take the look off Joe's face: "No, I know you weren't frightened, Joe. You just didn't like it under the blankets." And Mungo grinned.

Joe started to blink rapidly. He lowered his head, scowled at the deck.

Mungo glanced at him sideways, switched the subject, "I wonder whether they've had any luck with the boat-hooks?" Then he saw that the others had given up using the boat-hooks over the stern and he called out, "No good, Angus?"

"Boat-hooks?" said Joe.

Angus and Donald joined them. With a brief shake of his head in answer to Mungo's query, Angus smiled at Joe. "And how is our performing seal getting on?"

He looked rather tired, thought Mungo.

Just then the *Poosie Nancy* lurched with more violence than before, and in the act of replying to Angus, Joe became conscious of something odd. He could hear that swooshing sound. He cocked his head to one side.

"Funny," he said, rolling his tongue round inside his mouth like a man searching for raspberry pips under his bottom denture; then his brow cleared and a look of comprehension came over his face. He turned to Angus happily and informed him, "You've stopped the engine, that's what!"

And before Angus could word a response he added, reproving; "You shouldn't have done that for me, Skipper. My strong-arm pal, he'll keep anyone out of the screw." Yet again Joe hesitated, for a moment's thought had revealed the inadequacy of that: Angus needn't have stopped her anyway. He could have put her in neutral.

The *Poosie Nancy* righted herself from another lurch. Some of the sea had fingered the starboard gunwale and reached over, but not much. What had come aboard slopped around in little unauthorized runnels. And now that nothing had come from using the boat-hooks this was a time of hiatus, of wonder and probing, of faint and as yet unacceptable incredulity, but not of haste.

Angus said gently, "Joe, I'm afraid we've landed a tougher fish than you in the screw." He coughed.

And then Joe knew that something was broken.

In Joe's mind then was an image of china, of cups and plates on the floor and certainly—although here he couldn't as yet see why—himself to blame. There wasn't much cause for blame in his life these days, perhaps because he was happy. But there in that image that always leapt up when he smelt trouble, he was clearly at fault.

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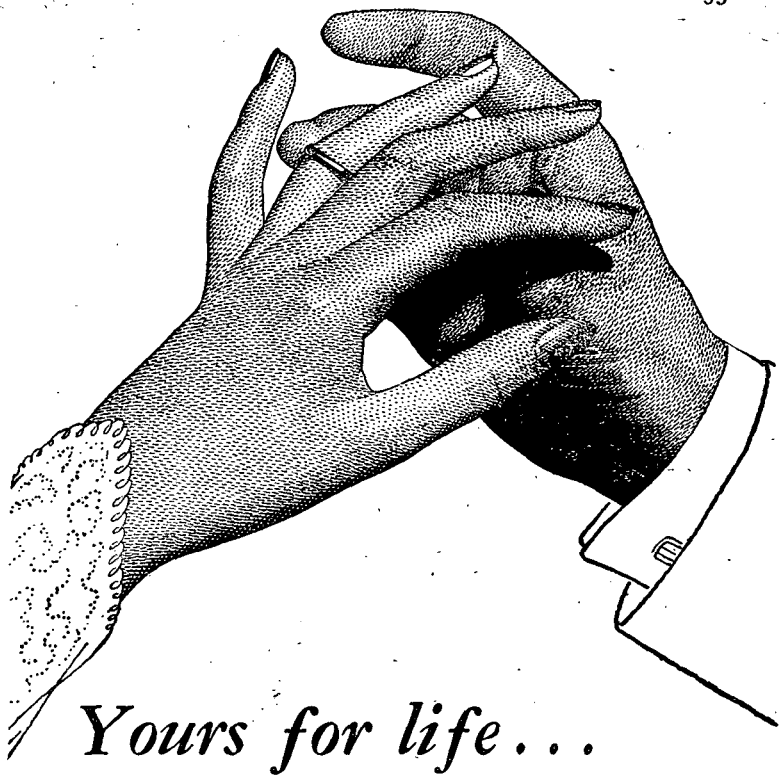

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An irate Mr. Simmons stood over a youthful Joe in the hotel kitchen Joe had been placed in on leaving the orphanage. Mr. Simmons was making deductions, financial deductions that left Joe's wages so meagre that soon he was forced to embark on a series of little pilferings which had only ended the night Mr. Simmons surprised him smuggling a mixture of Russian salad and guinea-fowl out of the service back door in brown paper bags. The appointment had ceased; the image persisted . . .

No one ever knew what particular trouble it was that one day made Joe think it prudent to hide in Scarvaig until the coaster that had called in with him aboard sailed on. But there Joe was, ten years ago, a sort of loose seaman, at a time when Angus MacVicar needed a cook-hand on the *Poosie Nancy*. And here he was now, wanting this life with Angus never to end and thinking of broken china and hoping that if, here, somehow, he were at fault, Angus would tear into him like Mr. Simmons had done, but knowing he wouldn't.

Angus said: "You see, Joe, when you—Yes, Donald? What is it?"

Donald was shifting his feet with unease. Slowly, apologetically, spacing his words as if he were still in the process of stringing them all together—or perhaps it was only because he wanted to have them disproved—he said: "You don't think—It couldn't have been the sling with the shackle, could it? No . . . You don't think it, do you?"

None of them made the slightest attempt to disprove his words. To Donald's dismay it looked as if someone were taking them up.

"Yes!" Mungo narrowed his eyes, addressing himself to Angus. "It was." And now in Mungo came a little start of percipience, but obliquely.

Angus stared back at him soberly. "Man—are you certain?"

"Yes."

"The one with the shackle?"

"I'm afraid so, Angus."

"How are you certain?"

"I saw it go."

Angus sighed. And at that—cold, insidious, quick—a small dark hand reached out, touched Mungo's heart, then clenched and unclenched and then let go and left him breathless and on that instant confused, for this was the touch of fear but not of physical fear.

He said, "I knew there was something. I've been trying to think what it was since you pulled us aboard. I heard it go too: it hit the gunwale with a thump. Anyway, a rope couldn't stop her as quickly as she did stop, could it?"

Angus said, "No, very unlikely."

And there, that hand reached out once more and this time laid hold of his person and now, for himself, Mungo partially comprehended. The boat—the instrument, the means of this way of life—was menaced.

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Well, all right. But what sort of rubbishy feeling was this underneath? Just that he didn't want to go back to the other?

"I thought it was," he said. And as he said it or even before, he was back in his thoughts and feeling that other existence crystallize out of the sight of Donald kicking the drums of the winch, and seeing himself come into a pub in London—not very far back, just eight months back—at a time when he hadn't known quite where to start and was even wondering whether he had been right in deciding not to go back to Ireland after the war.

Beside him Donald was saying, "But it might just be that it's hanging loose, do you imagine? Do you not think it might still just be the rope?" Angus pulled out a handkerchief.

"No, I am just afraid it is not, Donald." He blew his nose strengthily. "It'll be more than a rope, I'm afraid."

And now, as he looked from one to the other and saw Joe's growing confusion, Mungo remembered how he had left that futile life in the morning. How he had caught the first train to Scotland. How over a week had passed, he remembered, and no one had taken him on—not on trawlers, not on drifters, not on ring-net boats: it had seemed that his accent was more of a handicap than was his lack of experience—until that elderly fishery officer somewhere had said: "Why don't you try Scarvaig? It's only a wee place of course, and most of the boats is run on a family basis; but you never know, do you?" Well, you never did.

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For now he remembered how, on a Sunday, was it, he'd lowered himself down that high pier at Scarvaig, then crossed the decks of five or six other boats before he'd come to the one he wanted. And how there, a stocky grey-jerseyed man of about fifty had looked at him almost with startlement on first sight but had presently lifted the jersey, scratched at his chest underneath, and said, "You'd best come into the foc'sle and we'll see what you're thinking about."

"No," repeated Angus MacFarlane, here, now, and at sea. "I doubt it's the shackle, right enough." He pushed the handkerchief back in his pocket.

There were only a few gulls round them now and these, Mungo saw, had to put up a struggle to stay.

Joe said, "I don't understand what you're talking about. Shackle? What shackle?"

And in his confusion Joe was aggrieved.

Angus coughed. He cleared his throat. Then taking each roll of the boat with a sideways flex of his hips he began explaining to Joe, to them all—to himself really, as much as anyone else—working it out aloud and using the simple words as a background noise against which to surprise the full portent. And Angus was so absorbed that for once he failed to work out in advance what effect his manner might have on the others.

"Joe, there's a sling followed you over the side when, when you went for your swim. It had a shackle, Joe—just a wee shackle. I doubt the shackle's got wedged in the stern-tube, Joe. Aye, aye, the tube protrudes in a sleeve over the shaft a wee bittie—beyond the gland, you'll mind?" He stamped one foot as the boat took a lunge, went away into himself, then continued without addressing any one of them in particular.

"The stern-tube metal is not very hard, you'll remember; it's a soft metal they make these stern-tubes out of, you see. Aye, aye, I doubt that what with the rope packing up on the shaft and the shaft itself turning just very fast, the shackle will just have been driven right in. And the shackle being so small and so hard, you understand, and the engine driving so firm and so strong, you understand, the shackle will just have cut its way into the softer metal of the tube until—" he sucked in his breath as though deliberating on how best to produce some meaty point in a debate—"until it has jammed the whole thing up." And having made his point by pronouncing "jammed," as if it were spelt "*chammed*," Angus came back to them all, "That's the way I'm thinking it's happened, Joe."

Joe understood now. Joe said, "That's nasty."

And that was Joe.

But Mungo—Mungo was still standing silent and, to outward appearances, quite undismayed. Yet inside, inside he was cold, cold and conscious, conscious yet not understanding why it was that the boat—yes, and this particular boat for some unprobed reason—had meant so much; and now not seeing the others but

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alone with a sense of pointlessness and then with a drab little spurt of anger: there were other boats, surely to God.

He drew in a breath, avoiding Angus's eyes. He saw Joe turn and he turned round with him.

Then these two did what the others had earlier done, and together, but each with his separate eyes, they looked to windward where the vault of the heavens rose from the darkening blurring edge of the world and where the sky appeared to be hardly moving at all—just packed and bulging and black and building over the waters—and the two of them followed it up the dome and they saw it was all the time gathering impetus there as it came until, directly over their heads (and not very far at that, thought Joe, seeing only the wicked sky) it seemed to be making a terrible fuss about getting right down to the south, and "you could *hear* it scrambling, scurrying, hurrying there" was Joe's continuing thought—that was the nasty thing; and Joe had seen plenty of wicked skies in the past without turning a hair, yet he followed this one right over as if to make sure that it wasn't a trick of some sort and then, with a sudden start, he too observed that innocuous-looking island down to the south, that upsurge of rock at which he'd so often before glanced without actually taking it in like this.

"Very nasty," he added slowly. "Will I make a cup of tea?"

Joe had seen no vaults, no domes, no edges of the world—Mungo saw those with a curious shock of inner division, of unexplored awe in which lay strangely, somehow, somewhere, the promise of relief—but Joe, even without those things, Joe had seen quite enough.

"Pot of tea," he repeated firmly, and made for the foc'sle hatch.

Still Mungo stared. He was drawn and held, on the moment. And standing there, unintruded upon like that, he felt a sharp little thrill of excitation go through him. What was it? He didn't probe. There was no hurry. No, no hurry.

Yet the others were moving and Mungo moved with them.

He said, "Is there any hope of our getting at the screw? Of our going down?"

Angus shrugged. "Mungo-boy, you could never do anything there for the cold: this is no the Riviera, mind. No, we'll just have to be trying to free the shaft from the engine-room. We—" He stopped abruptly, held on to the winch as the boat took another wild lurch. He looked at them all in amusement mixed with chagrin at himself.

"Why, what a clown I am, to be sure! What with you two there in the water and the fact that we've never had to be using the thing before, I'd clean forgotten about that pocket-handkerchief piece of canvas we've got." He put one hand under his jersey and scratched at his chest. "It's no very much of a thing, mind you—these boats are not really built for the sail. But if we cannot get clearing the screw, why it'll take us in somewhere or keep us dodging at sea until someone finds us tomorrow." He removed his hand. "Just a great big clown that I am!"

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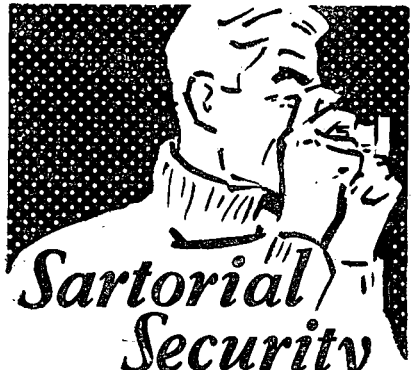

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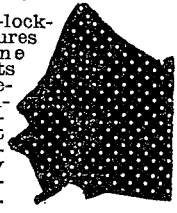

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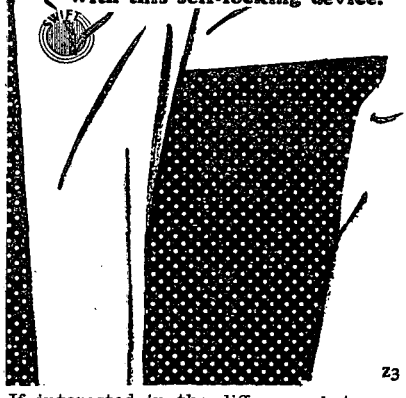

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Mungo let out his breath in a long sigh. Donald said, "Aye, aye, the sail."

And the three of them turned aft.

None of them noticed Joe. But behind them there, Joe was behaving in rather an odd fashion.

Joe also had felt something touch him—not inside but outside as it were—with guilt. Hearing Angus's words when halfway down the foc'sle hatch, he had straightened up as if he'd been tapped in the dark on the shoulder, much as the music-hall burglar might do; and he stayed like that for a moment, rigid. Then slowly he turned his head and he stared at Angus's back with a look first of incredulity, then of pleading, then of harassment, and then of gradual deep-seated horrified acceptance. His face puckered up as though in another minute he'd burst into tears.

He heard Mungo say, "It won't do any harm to have a shot at looking, to see what's what, will it?"

Then, instead of bursting into those tears, Joe huddled on down to make tea for them all and to think about what had troubled his mind so grossly.

An hour or so later they pulled Donald in over the stern. There were no gulls round them now: it was late. A heavy squall had just passed by and the boat still rocked from its impact so that, across the gunwale, Donald almost fell back. But they had him by a rope.

He towelled himself vigorously. His teeth were chattering and his face was grey and his eyes were red-rimmed and watery. And he looked very miserable there in the losing light.

"I couldn't—I couldn't see much, Angus," he reported between gasps. "But it's just like Mungo was saying: the thing seems to be firm in the sleeve. And smothered with rope."

Mungo, whose body was tingling warm under his clothes with an afterglow from his own second immersion, nodded agreement. He was matter-of-fact.

Donald paused for a moment and, released at one end, the towel blew out horizontally as he undid the rope round his waist. He took his underpants from the silent Joe, stepped into them. And Joe, if anything, was even more miserable-looking than Donald.

Donald continued to chatter on in a frozen frenzy. "A wee bit livelier, aye, aye, livelier, livelier up here, up here than when I went down. Aye, aye, I'd say that that man—that man on the wireless, you know—I'd say, I'd say he was right."

Angus patted his bottom. "Take him into the foc'sle, Joe, and give him some cocoa. Mungo-boy, you and I will just have another look at the shaft in the engine-room." He looked up. "Go along, Joe."

But Joe didn't move.

Silent for some time past, Joe had been waiting with desperate hope in his breast. Until this moment there had been a slight chance that Mungo and Donald might save him; but now, with

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Mungo's pronouncement endorsed by Donald, Joe had abandoned all hope of keeping his trouble private. Devastated, he stood there in Angus's path, wanting to speak but not knowing how to begin.

"Yes, Joe?"

"The sail," said Joe, and stared.

"The sail," said Angus, and nodded. "Ah yes, the sail. Well, Joe, I think we'll just get putting it up straight away. She'll be more comfortable, holding her head to the weather."

Still Joe made no move.

Mungo looked at him narrowly. Donald, almost recovered after the rubbing, pulled on his trousers. Angus said rather edgily, "Well, Joe?"

Joe gulped. He blurted, "It's in the store."

"The store?"

"At Scarvaig."

"At—at Scarvaig?" Then unbelievingly, "What is?"

And aghast, "It is. The sail is."

In the act of fastening his flybuttons, Donald looked round. He pushed his head forward to gaze a little more closely at Joe. Then, as if he imagined he might be thought guilty of eavesdropping, Donald returned to his buttons and started to whistle soundlessly in the teeth of the sound of the wind.

A spot appeared in the distance against the darkening sky. It was a body, hurtling towards them; it was a bird, a belated home-going gull. It was over the boat: there! Then it was once more a bird, that much nearer to home, then again a body, a spot; and then it was gone, snatched into the opposite curve of the oncoming night. It hadn't swivelled its head even in curiosity.

But only Mungo watched it.

To get the details more clear in his mind, Angus was saying, "So the sail is in the store."

And Joe was whispering back, "On the left as you go in—up on the shelf." A gulp. "The shelf above your ring nets." Another gulp and it seemed he had ended. But Joe didn't care for silences now, so still in a whisper, "It's dry up there, see? No damp on the second shelf. Not above your ring nets, there isn't. That's why—" And there he did tail off.

But he had no need to go further: they'd all got it clear in their minds.

The sail was lying in the store at Scarvaig.

★ ***The Second (and last) Part of "Storm," by P. Fitzgerald O'Connor, appears in next month's Argosy on sale November 10.***

* * *

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ARGOSY CROSS-WORD

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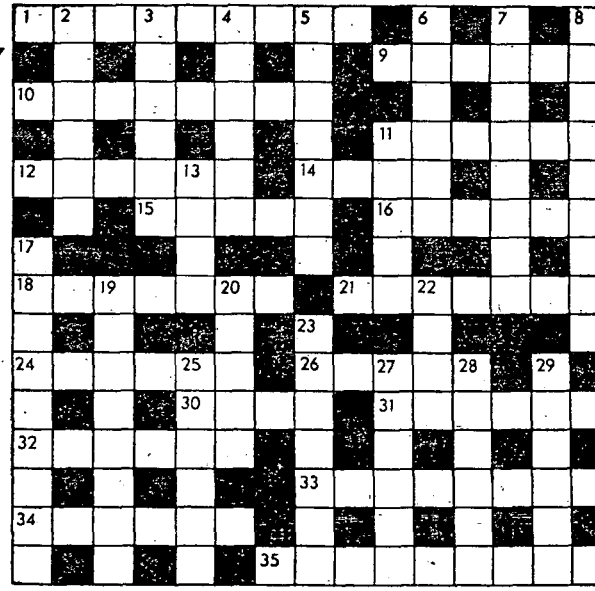
Solution on Page 97

★



CLUES

Across

1 I've something ahead at which to aim (9).
9 It's in the bergamot I've grown (6).
10 "Let —— Tragedy, In sceptred pall come sweeping by" (Milton) (8).
11 Stone that wears the shoe—or what the mender does to it? (6).
12 Perhaps one of those that gang agley according to Burns (6).
14 This footwear is nearly taboo (4).
15 Not a permanent wave—something of a bore, in fact (5).
16 Wizard bird (6).
18 Spanish grandee (7).
21 A god, a card and an article—or a cure-all? (7).
24 Bay not necessarily on the coast (6).
26 Where a surprise takes you (5).
30 Confused rage when you can't change it? (4).
31 —— is believing (6).
32 One of the musketeers after a bee? (6).
33 "Tell me not in —— numbers Life is but an empty dream!" (Longfellow) (8).
34 I ought to be in the widow's (6).
35 Not sensational (9).

Down

2 Decorative pin (6).
3 Bird that is bigger without its tail (6).
4 Dot Leo (6).
5 What is in this cannot be seen (7).
6 Prairie-wolf (6).
7 I'd oil cab (8).
8 Do these plants have everlasting flowers? (9).
11 Butterfly that makes only a short stop with us (5).
13 Its sails catch the wind but it stays put (4).
17 Some case-hardened old sailor (9).
19 Mix a tubful, do! (8).
20 Heraldic colour (5).
22 A pleasant town? Yes, it takes the biscuit (4).
23 One who enjoys a good row (7).
25 East go I, followed by a bit of smoke (6).
27 Inside vast utensils (6).
28 Nut without a part of 17 down (6).
29 How one gets served in a queue (2, 4).

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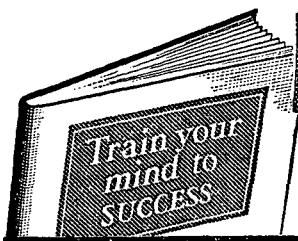

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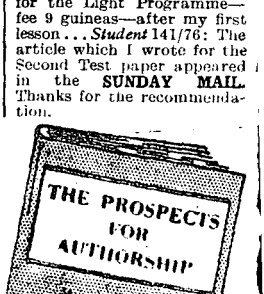

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